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BETTY'S BRIGHT IDEA

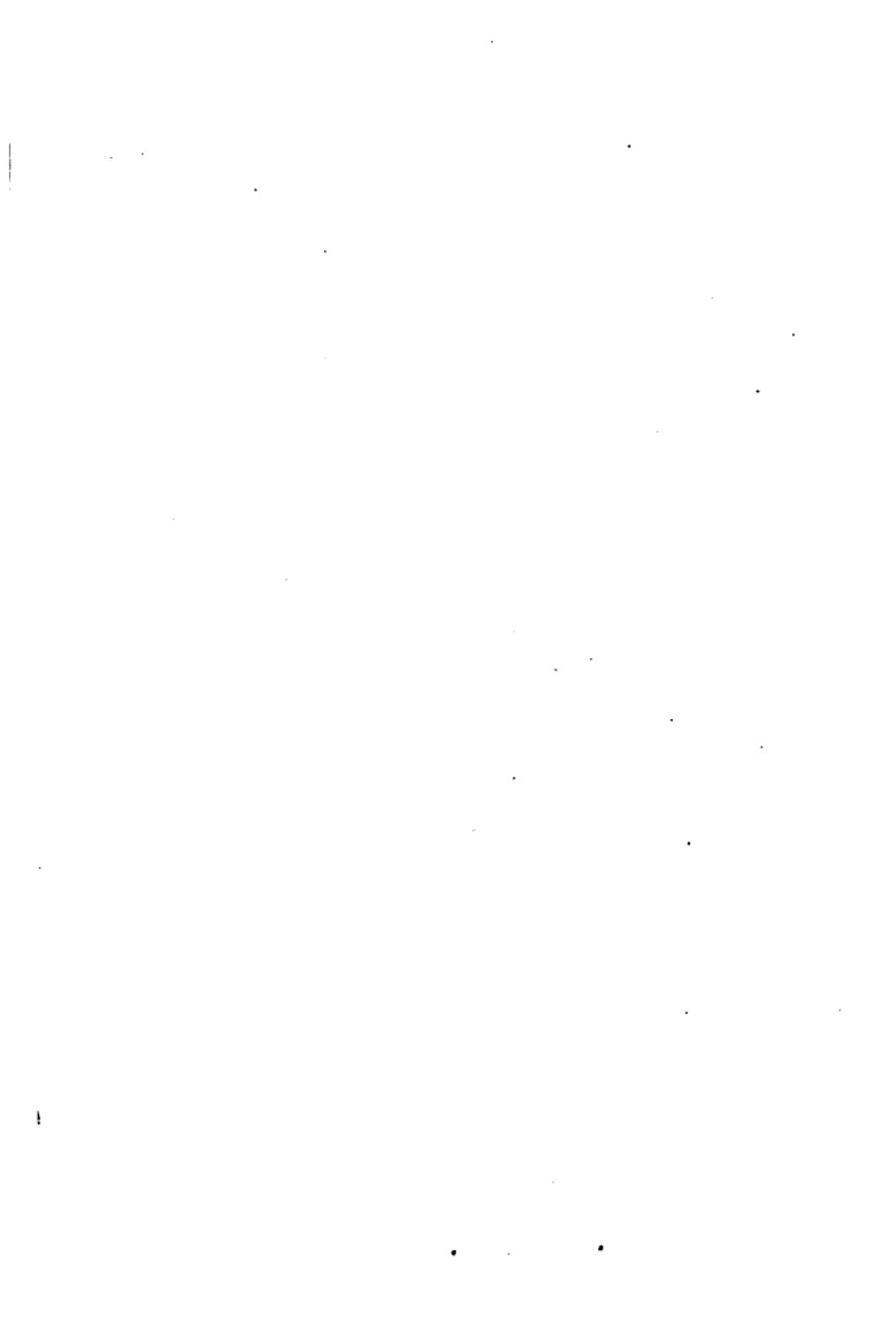
by
MRS. HARRIET BEECHER STOWE



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HAPPY

NEW YEAR

1850



Betty's Bright Idea:

And other Stories.

BY

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE,

AUTHOR OF "UNCLE TOM'S CABIN," &c.



GLASGOW:
SCOTTISH TEMPERANCE LEAGUE.
LONDON: HOULSTON & SONS; AND W. TWEEDIE.

1876.





PREFATORY NOTE.

THE Directors having asked Mrs. H. BEECHER STOWE to write a book for the League on the Temperance question, Mrs. Stowe, in regretting her inability to comply with the request, kindly granted permission to reprint several of the Stories which have proceeded from her accomplished pen. Accepting the generous offer, the Directors have thus selected several of the Tales on the Temperance reformation, and have arranged them so as to form the present volume. The letter from Mrs. Stowe will be read with pleasure, as showing her unabated interest in this great work:—

“HARTFORD, July 19, 1876.

“DEAR SIR,—I have delayed for some time answering your letter, because I have really hoped that I might find myself in circumstances to respond favourably. But the present state of my health and engagements gives no promise for some time yet to come, and I therefore reply with regret that, with the utmost sympathy for

your work, I do not yet find myself strong enough for this undertaking at present.

“I have in times past printed short stories, however, which I think might serve your purpose, and I shall this day write to my publisher to send them to you. In the volume called *The Mayflower*, issued years ago, is a Temperance story called ‘Let every Man Mind his own Business,’ which I think is as good or better than anything I am able to write now.

“Last Christmas I published a short story called *Betty’s Bright Idea*, which turns on the reformation of a drinker. There is another Temperance story which I published in a weekly paper about fifteen years since, but have kept no copy of. If I can recover it I will send it to you. You are at liberty to print and scatter any of these in any form you see best.

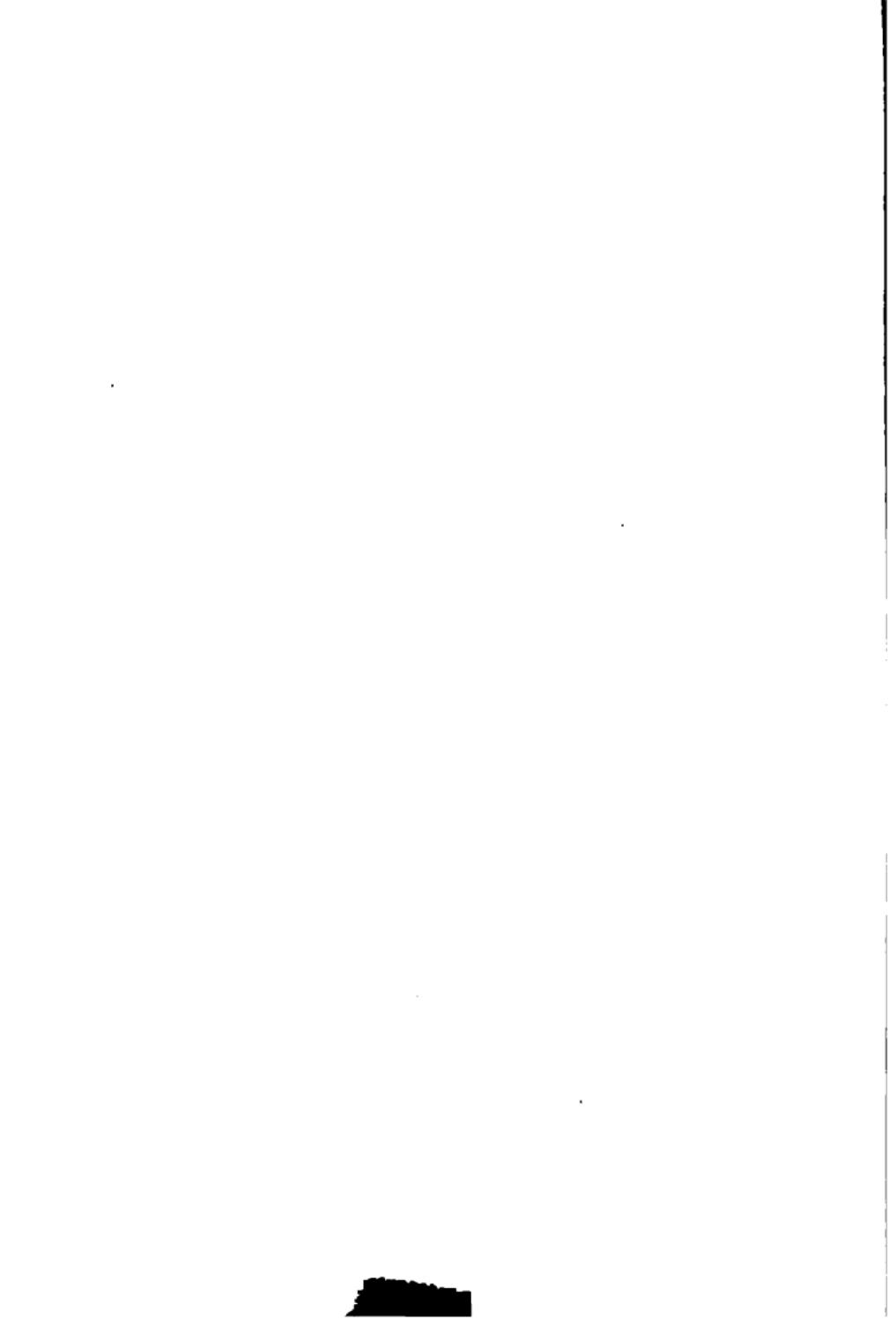
“In my novel entitled *My Wife and I*, there is one letter in which Bolton, a man of talent and fine character, describes the course by which he fell into the habit, and the desolation it has wrought in his life. I have thought this letter would make a good and impressive tract.

“If God spares my life and gives me strength, I yet hope to do something more upon this subject. Yours very sincerely,

H. B. STOWE.”

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BETTY'S BRIGHT IDEA.







BETTY'S BRIGHT IDEA.

"When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and
GAVE GIFTS unto men" (EPH. iv. 8).

Some say that ever, 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrate,
The bird of dawning singeth all night long.
And then, they say, no evil spirit walks;
The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike,
No fairy takes, no witch hath power to charm,—
So hallowed and so gracious is the time.

AND this holy time, so hallowed and so gracious, was settling down over the great roaring, rattling, seething life-world of New York in the good year 1875. Who does not feel its on-coming in the shops and streets, in the festive air of trade and business, in the thousand garnitures by which every store hangs out triumphal banners, and solicits you to buy something for a Christmas gift? For it is the peculiarity of all this array of prints, confectionary, dry goods, and

manufactures of all kinds, that their bravery and splendour at Christmas tide is all to seduce you into generosity, and importune you to give something to others. It says to you, "The dear God gave *you* an unspeakable gift; give *you* a lesser gift to your brother!"

Do we ever think, when we walk those busy, bustling streets, all alive with Christmas shoppers, and mingle with the rushing tides that throng and jostle through the stores, that unseen spirits may be hastening to and fro along those same ways bearing Christ's Christmas gifts to men—gifts whose value no earthly gold or gems can represent?

Yet on this morning of the day before Christmas were these Shining Ones moving to and fro with the crowd, whose faces were loving and serene as the invisible stars, whose robes took no defilement from the spatter and the rush of earth, whose coming and going was still as the falling snow-flakes. They entered houses without ringing door-bells, they passed through apartments without opening doors, and everywhere they were bearing Christ's Christmas presents, and silently offering them to whoever would open their souls to receive. Like themselves, their gifts were invisible—incapable of weight and

measurement in gross earthly scales. To mourners they carried joy; to weary and perplexed hearts, peace; to souls stifling in luxury and self-indulgence they carried that noble discontent that rises to aspiration for higher things. Sometimes they took away an earthly treasure to make room for a heavenly one. They took health, but left resignation and cheerful faith. They took the babe from the dear cradle, but left in its place a heart full of pity for the suffering on earth, and a fellowship with the blessed in heaven. Let us follow their footsteps awhile.

S C E N E I.

A young girl's boudoir in one of our American palaces of luxury, built after the choicest fancy of the architect, and furnished in all the latest devices of household decoration. Pictures, statuettes, and every form of *bijouterie* make the room a miracle of beauty, and the little princess of all sits in an easy chair before the fire, and thus revolves with herself:—"O, dear me! Christmas is a bore! Such a rush and crush in the streets, such a jam in the shops, and then

such a fuss thinking up presents for everybody ! All for nothing too ; for nobody wants anything. I'm sure I don't. I'm surfeited now with pictures and jewelry, and bon-bon boxes, and little China dogs and cats—and all these things that get so thick you can't move without upsetting some of them. There's papa, he don't want anything. He never uses any of my Christmas presents when I get them; and mamma, she has every earthly thing I can think of, and said the other day she did hope nobody 'd give her any more worsted work ! Then Aunt Maria and Uncle John, they don't want the things I give them ; they have more than they know what to do with now. All the boys say they don't want any more cigar-cases, or slippers, or smoking-caps. Oh dear ! ”

Here the Shining Ones came and stood over the little lady, and looked down on her with faces of pity, which seemed bleut with a serene and half-amused indulgence. It was a heavenly amusement, such as that with which mothers listen to the foolish-wise prattle of children just learning to talk.

As the grave, sweet eyes rested tenderly on her the girl somehow grew graver, leaned back in her chair, and sighed a little.

"I wish I knew how to be better!" she said to herself. "I remember last Sunday's text, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' That must mean something! Well, isn't there something too in the Bible about not giving to your rich neighbours that can give again, but giving to the poor that cannot recompense you? I don't know any poor people. Papa says there are very few deserving poor people. Well, for the matter of that, there aren't many *deserving rich* people. I, for example, how much do I *deserve* to have all these nice things? I'm no better than the poor shop-girls that go trudging by in the cold at six o'clock in the morning—ugh! it makes me shiver to think of it. I know if I had to do that I shouldn't be good at all. Well, I'd like to give to poor people, if I knew any."

At this moment the door opened, and the maid entered.

"Betty, do you know any poor people I ought to get things for this Christmas?"

"Poor folks is always plenty, miss," said Betty.

"O yes, of course, beggars; but I mean people that I could do something for besides just give cold victuals or money. I don't know where to hunt them up, and should be afraid to go if I did. O dear! it's no use. I'll give it up."

"Why, Miss Florence, that 'ud be too bad, afther bein' that good in yer heart, to let the poor folks alone for fear of goin' to them. But ye needn't do that, for, now I think of it, there's John Morley's wife."

"What! the gardener father turned off for drinking?"

"The same, miss. Poor boy, he's not so bad, and he's got a wife and two as pretty children as ever you see."

"I always liked John," said the young lady. "But papa is so strict about some things! He says he never will keep a man a day if he finds out that he drinks."

She was quite silent for a minute, and then broke out:

"I don't care; it's a good idea! I say, Betty, do you know where John's wife lives?"

"Yes, miss, I've been there often."

"Well, then, this afternoon I'll go with you and see if I can do anything for them."

S C E N E I I.

An attic room, neat and clean, but poorly furnished; a bed and a trundle-bed, a small

cooking-stove, a shelf with a few dishes, one or two chairs and stools, a pale, thin woman working on a vest.

Her face is anxious; her thin hands tremble with weakness, and now and then, as she works, quiet tears drop, which she wipes quickly. Poor people cannot afford to shed tears; it takes time and injures eyesight.

This is John Morley's wife. This morning he has risen and gone out in a desperate mood. "No use to try," he says. "Didn't I go a whole year and never touch a drop? And now just because I fell once I'm kicked out! No use to try. When a fellow once trips, everybody gives him a kick. Talk about love of Christ! Who believes it? Don't see much love of Christ where I go. Your Christians hit a fellow that's down as hard as anybody. It's everybody for himself, and devil take the hindmost. Well, I'll trudge up to the Brooklyn Navy Yard and see if they'll take me on there—if they won't I might as well go to sea, or to the devil"—and out he flings.

"Mamma!" says a little voice, "what are we going to have for our Christmas?"

It is a little girl, with soft curly hair and bright, earnest eyes that speaks.

A sturdy little fellow of four presses up to the

mother's knee and repeats the question, "Sha'n't we have a Christmas, mother?"

It overcomes the poor woman; she leans forward and breaks into sobbing,—a tempest of sorrow, long suppressed, that shakes her weak frame as she thinks that her husband is out of work, desperate, discouraged, and tempted of the devil; that the rent is falling due, and only the poor pay of her needle to meet it with. In one of those quick flashes which concentrate through the imagination the sorrows of years she seems to see her little home broken up, her husband in the gutter, her children turned into the street. At this moment there goes up from her heart a despairing cry, such as a poor, hunted, tired-out creature gives when brought to the last gasp of endurance. It was like the shriek of the hare when the hounds are upon it. She clasps her hands and cries out, "O my God, help me!"

There was no voice of any that answered; there was no sound of foot-fall on the staircase; no one entered the door; and yet that agonized cry had reached the heart it was meant for. The Shining Ones were with her; they stood, with faces full of tenderness, beaming down upon her; they brought her a Christmas gift from Christ—the gift of trust. She knew not from whence

came the courage and rest that entered her soul; but while her little ones stood wondering and silent, she turned and drew to herself her well-worn Bible. Hands that she did not see guided her as she turned the pages, and pointed the words: "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence, and precious shall their blood be in his sight."

She laid down her poor wan cheek on the merciful old book, as on her mother's breast, and gave up all the tangled skein of life into the hands of Infinite Pity. There seemed a consoling presence in the room, and her tired heart found rest.

She wiped away her tears, kissed her children, and smiled upon them. Then she rose, gathered up her finished work, and attired herself to go forth and carry it back to the shop.

"Mother," said the children softly, "they are dressing the church, and the gates are open, and people are going in and out; mayn't we play there by the church?"

The mother looked out on the ivy-grown walls of the church, with its flocks of twittering sparrows, and said:

"Yes, my little birds; you may play there if you'll be very good and quiet."

The mother had only her small, close attic room for her darlings, and to satisfy all their childish desire for variety and motion she had only the refuge of the streets. She was a decent, godly woman, and the bold manners and evil words of street vagrants were terrible to her; and so, when the church gates were open for daily morning and evening prayers she had often begged the sexton to let her little ones come in and hear the singing, and wander hand in hand around the old church walls. He was a kindly old man, and the children, stealing round like two still, bright-eyed little mice, had gained upon his heart, and he made them welcome there. It gave the mother a feeling of protection to have them play near the church, as if it were a father's house.

So she put on their little hoods and tippets, and led them forth, and saw them into the yard; and as she looked to the old gray church, with its rustling ivy bowers and flocks of birds, her heart swelled within her. "Yea, the sparrow hath found a house and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God!" And

" ivy and holly, and
of bright red
the yard, and
O Tottie!"
tty things.

III

as he
ily into the yard. "They
ir mother's tears; but she
nd that had made all right
sun was shining brightly, and
e sunny side of the old church,
ed and chirped and chittered to
merrily as the little birds in the ivy

sexton came to the side door and threw
armful of refuse greens, and then stopped
ent and nodded kindly at them.

"May we play with them, please, sir?" said
e little Elsie, looking up with great reverence.

"Oh, yes, to be sure; these are done with—
they are no good now."

"Oh, Tottie!" cried Elsie, rapturously, "just
think, he says we may play with all these. Why
here's ever and ever so much green, enough to
play house. Let's play build a house for father
and mother."

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church. There were bits of ivy and holly, and ruffles of ground-pine, and lots of bright red berries that came flying forth into the yard, and the children screamed for joy. "O Tottie!" "O Elsie!" "Only see how many pretty things. Lots and lots!"

The sexton stood and looked and laughed as he saw the little ones so eager for the scraps and remnants.

"Don't you want to come in and see the church?" he said. "It's all done now, and a brave sight it is. You may come in."

They tipped in softly, with large bright, wondering eyes. The light through the stained glass windows fell blue and crimson and yellow on the pillars all ruffled with ground-pine and brightened with scarlet bitter-sweet berries, and there were stars and crosses and mottoes in green all through the bowery aisles, while the organist, hid in a thicket of verdure, was practising softly, and sweet voices sung:

"Hark! the herald angels sing
Glory to the new-born King."

The little ones wandered up and down the long aisles in a dream of awe and wonder. "Hush, Tottie!" said Elsie, when he broke into an eager

exclamation, "don't make a noise. I do believe it's something like heaven," she said, under her breath.

They made the course of the church and came round by the door again, where the sexton stood smiling on them.

"You can find lots of pretty Christmas greens out there," he said, pointing to the door; "perhaps your folks would like to have some."

"Oh, thank you, sir," exclaimed Elsie, rapturously. "Oh, Tottie, only think! Let's gather a good lot and go home and dress our room for Christmas. Oh, *won't* mother be astonished when she comes home, we'll make it so pretty!"

And forthwith the children began gathering into their little aprons wreaths of ground-pine, sprigs of holly, and twigs of crimson bitter-sweet. The sexton, seeing their zeal, brought out to them a little cross, fancifully made of red alder-berries and pine.

Then he said, "A lady took that down to put up a bigger one, and she gave it to me; you may have it if you want it."

"Oh, how beautiful!" said Elsie. "How glad I am to have this for mother! When she comes back she *won't* know our room; it will be as fine as the church."

Soon the little gleaners were toddling off out of the yard—moving masses of green with all that their aprons and their little hands could carry.

The sexton looked after them. “Take heed that ye despise not these little ones,” he said to himself, “for in heaven their angels—”

A ray of tenderness fell on the old man’s head; it was from the Shining One who watched the children. He thought it was an afternoon sun-beam. His heart grew gentle and peaceful, and his thoughts went far back to a distant green grove where his own little one was sleeping. “Seems to me I’ve loved all little ones ever since,” he said, thinking far back to the Christmas week when his lamb was laid to rest. “Well, she shall not return to me, but I shall go to her.” The smile of the Shining One made a warm glow in his heart, which followed him all the way home.

The children had a merry time dressing the room. They stuck good big bushes of pine in each window; they put a little ruffle of ground-pine round mother’s Bible, and they fastened the beautiful red cross up over the table, and they stuck sprigs of pine or holly into every crack that could be made, by fair means or foul, to accept it, and they were immensely satisfied and delighted. Tottie insisted on hanging up his string of many-coloured

beads in the window to imitate the effect of the stained glass of the great church window.

"It looks pretty when the light comes through," he remarked; and Elsie admitted that they might play they were painted windows, with some show of propriety. When everything had been stuck somewhere, Elsie swept the floor, and made up a fire, and put on the tea-kettle, to have everything ready to strike mother favourably on her return.

SCENE IV.

A freezing, bright, cold afternoon. "Cold as Christmas!" say cheery voices, as the crowds rush to and fro into shops and stores, and come out with hands full of presents.

"Yes, cold as Christmas," says John Morley. "I should think so! Cold enough for a fellow that can't get in anywhere—that nobody wants and nobody helps! I should think so!"

John had been trudging all day from point to point, only to hear the old story: times were hard, work was dull, nobody wanted him, and he felt morose and surly—out of humour with himself and with everybody else.

It is true that his misfortunes were from his own fault; but that consideration never makes a man a particle more patient or good-natured—indeed, it is an additional bitterness in his cup. John was an Englishman. When he first landed in New York from the old country he had been wild and dissipated and given to drinking. But by his wife's earnest entreaties he had been persuaded to sign the temperance pledge, and had gone on prosperously, keeping it for a year. He had a good place and good wages, and all went well with him till in an evil hour he met some of his former boon companions, and was induced to have a social evening with them.

In the first half-hour of that evening were lost the fruits of the whole year's self-denial and self-control. He was not only drunk that night, but he went off for a fortnight, and was drunk night after night, and came back to find that his master had discharged him in indignation. John thinks this over bitterly as he thuds about in the cold, and calls himself a fool.

Yet, if the truth must be confessed, John had not much "sense of sin," so called. He looked on himself as an unfortunate and rather ill-used man, for had he not tried very hard to be good, and gone a great while against the stream of evil inclination?

and now, just for one yielding, he was pitched out of place, and everybody was turned against him! He thought this was hard measure. Didn't everybody hit wrong sometimes? Didn't rich fellows have their wine, and drink a little too much now and then? Yet nobody was down on *them*.

"It's only because I'm poor," said John. "Poor folks' sins are never pardoned. There's my good wife—poor girl!" and John's heart felt as if it were breaking, for he was an affectionate creature, and loved his wife and babies, and in his deepest consciousness he knew that *he* was the one at fault. We have heard much about the sufferings of the wives and children of men who are overtaken with drink; but what is not so well understood is the sufferings of the men themselves in their sober moments, when they feel that they are becoming a curse to all that are dearest to them. John's very soul was wrung within him to think of the misery he had brought on his wife and children—the greater miseries that might be in store for them. He was faint of heart; he was tired; he had eaten nothing for hours, and on ahead he saw a drinking saloon. Why shouldn't he go and take one good drink, and then pitch off a ferry-boat into the East River, and so end the whole miserable muddle of life altogether?

John's steps were turning that way, when one of the Shining Ones, who had watched him all day, came nearer and took his hand. He felt no touch; but at that moment there darted into his soul a thought of his mother, long dead, and he stopped irresolute, then turned to walk another way. The hand that was guiding him led him to turn a corner, and his curiosity was excited by a stream of people who seemed to be pressing into a building. A distant sound of singing was heard as he drew nearer, and soon he found himself passing with the multitude into a great prayer-meeting. The music grew more distinct as he went in. A man was singing in clear, penetrating tones:

“What means this eager, anxious throng,
Which moves with busy haste along;
These wondrous gatherings day by day;
What means this strange commotion, say?
In accents hushed the throng reply,
‘Jesus of Nazareth passeth by!’”

John had but a vague idea of religion, yet something in the singing affected him; and, weary and footsore and heartsore as he was, he sank into a seat, and listened with absorbed attention:

“Jesus! 'tis he who once below
Man's pathway trod in toil and woe;

And burdened ones where'er he came
 Brought out their sick and deaf and lame.
 The blind rejoiced to hear the cry,
 'Jesus of Nazareth passeth by!'

"Ho, all ye heavy-laden, come!
 Here's pardon, comfort, rest, and home.
 Ye wanderers from a Father's face,
 Return, accept his proffered grace.
 Ye tempted ones, there's refuge nigh—
 'Jesus of Nazareth passeth by!'"

A plain man, who spoke the language of plain working-men, now arose and read from his Bible the words which the angel of old spoke to the shepherds of Bethlehem:

"Fear not, for behold, I bring you tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

The man went on to speak of this with an intense practical earnestness that soon made John feel as if *he*, individually, were being talked to; and the purport of the speech was this: that God had sent to him, John Morley, a Saviour to save *him* from his sins, to lift him above his weakness, to help him overcome his bad habits; that His name was called Jesus, because he shall save his people *from their sins*. John listened with a strange new thrill. This was what he needed—



a Friend, all-powerful, all-pitiful, who would undertake for him and help him to overcome himself—for he sorely felt how weak he was. Here was a Friend that could have compassion on the ignorant, and them that were out of the way. The thought brought tears to his eyes and a glow of hope to his heart. What if he *would* help him? for deep down in John's heart, worse than cold or hunger or weariness, was the dreadful conviction that he was a doomed man, that he should drink again as he had drunk, and never come to good, but fall lower and lower, and drag all who loved him down with him.

And was this mighty Saviour given to him?

"Yes," cried the man who was speaking ; "to *you*; to *you*, who have lost name and place; to *you*, that nobody cares for; to *you*, who have been down in the gutter. God has sent *you* a Saviour to take *you* up out of the mud and mire, to wash *you* clean, to give *you* strength to overcome your sins, and lead *you* home to his blessed kingdom. This is the glad tidings of great joy that the angels brought on the first Christmas day. CHRIST was *God's Christmas gift* to a poor, lost world, and *you* may have him now, to-day. He may be *your own Saviour*—yours as much as if there were no other one on earth to be saved.

He is looking for you to-day, coming after you, seeking you; he calls you by me. Oh, accept him now!"

There was a deep breathing of suppressed emotion as the speaker sat down, a pause of solemn stillness.

A faint strain of music was heard, and the singer began singing a pathetic ballad of a lost sheep, and of the Shepherd going forth to seek it:—

"There were ninety and nine that safely lay
In the shelter of the fold,
But one was out on the hills away,
Far off from the gates of gold—
Away on the mountains wild and bare,
Away from the tender Shepherd's care.

"Lord, Thou hast here Thy ninety and nine;
Are they not enough for Thee?
But the Shepherd made answer: 'This of mine
Has wandered away from me;
And although the road be rough and steep,
I go to the desert to find my sheep.'"

John heard with an absorbed interest. All around him were eager listeners, breathless, leaning forward with intense attention. The song went on:

"But none of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed;

Nor how dark was the night that the Lord went through
Ere he found His sheep that was lost.
Out in the desert He heard its cry—
Sick and helpless, and ready to die."

There was a throbbing pathos in the intonation, and the verse floated over the weeping throng; when, after a pause, the strain was taken up triumphantly:

"But all through the mountains thunder-riven,
And up from the rocky steep,
There rose a cry to the gates of heaven,
‘Rejoice! I have found my sheep!’
And the angels echoed around the throne,
‘Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own !’"

All day long poor John had felt so lonesome! Nobody cared for him; nobody wanted him; everything was against him; and, worst of all, he had no faith in himself. But here was this Friend, *seeking* him, following him through the cold alleys and crowded streets. In heaven they would be glad to hear that he had become a good man. The thought broke down all his pride, all his bitterness; he wept like a little child; and the Christmas gift of Christ—the sense of a real, present, loving, pitying Saviour—came into his very soul.

He went homeward as one in a dream. He

passed the drinking saloon without a thought or wish of drinking. The explosive force of a new emotion had for the time driven out all temptation. Raised above weakness, he thought only of this Jesus, this Saviour from sin, who he now believed had followed him and found him, and he longed to go home and tell his wife what great things the Lord had done for him.

S C E N E V.

Meanwhile a little drama had been acting in John's humble home. His wife had been to the shop that day and come home with the pittance for her work in her hands.

"I'll pay you full price to-day, but we can't pay such prices any longer," the man had said over the counter as he paid her. "Hard times—work dull—we are cutting down all our work-folks; you'll have to take a third less next time."

"I'll do my best," she said meekly, as she took her bundle of work and turned wearily away; but the invisible arm of the Shining One was round her, and the words again thrilled through her that she had read that morning: "He shall

redeem their soul from deceit and violence, and precious shall their blood be in his sight." She saw no earthly helper; she heard none and felt none, and yet her soul was sustained, and she came home in peace.

When she opened the door of her little room she drew back astonished at the sight that presented itself. A brisk fire was roaring in the stove, and the tea-kettle was sputtering and sending out clouds of steam. A table with a white cloth on it was drawn out before the fire, and a new tea set of pure white cups and saucers, with tea-pot, sugar-bowl, and creamer complete, gave a festive air to the whole. There were bread, and butter, and ham-sandwiches, and a Christmas cake all frosted, with little blue and red and green candles round it ready to be lighted, and a bunch of hot-house flowers in a pretty little vase in the centre.

A new stuffed rocking chair stood on one side of the stove, and there sat Miss Florence De Witt, our young princess of Scene First, holding little Elsie in her lap, while the broad, honest countenance of Betty was beaming with kindness down on the delighted face of Tottie. Both children were dressed from head to foot in complete new suits of clothes, and Elsie was holding with tender

devotion a fine doll, while Tottie rejoiced in a horse and cart which he was manœuvring under Betty's superintendence.

The little princess had pleased herself in getting up all this tableau. Doing good was a novelty to her, and she plunged into it with the zest of a new amusement. The amazed look of the poor woman, her dazed expressions of rapture and incredulous joy, the shrieks and cries of confused delight with which the little ones met their mother, delighted her more than any scene she had ever witnessed at the opera—with this added grace, unknown to her, that at this scene the invisible Shining Ones were pleased witnesses.

She had been out with Betty, buying here and there whatever was wanted,—and what was *not* wanted, for those who had been living so long without work or money !

She had their little coal-bin filled, and a nice pile of wood and kindlings put behind the stove. She had bought a nice rocking-chair for the mother to rest in. She had dressed the children from head to foot at a ready-made clothing store, and bought them toys to their hearts' desire, while Betty had set the table for a Christmas feast.

And now she said to the poor woman at last:
"I'm so sorry John lost his place at father's.

He was so kind and obliging, and I always liked him; and I've been thinking, if you'd get him to sign the pledge over again from Christmas Eve, never to touch another drop, I'll get papa to take him back. I always do get papa to do what I want, and the fact is, he hasn't got anybody that suited him so well since John left. So you tell John that I mean to go surety for him; he certainly won't fail *me*. Tell him *I trust him*." And Miss Florence pulled out a paper wherein, in her best round hand, she had written out again the temperance pledge, and dated it "*Christmas Eve, 1875.*"

"Now, you come with John to-morrow morning, and bring this with his name to it, and you'll see what I'll do!" and, with a kiss to the children the little good fairy departed, leaving the family to their Christmas Eve.

What that Christmas Eve was, when the husband and father came home with the new and softened heart that had been given him, who can say? There were joyful tears and solemn prayers, and earnest vows and purposes of a new life heard by the Shining Ones in the room that night.

"And the angels echoed around the throne,
Rejoice! for the Lord brings back his own."

SCENE VI.

"Now, papa, I want you to give me something special to-day, because it's Christmas," said the little princess to her father, as she kissed and wished him "Merry Christmas" next morning.

"What is it, pussy—half of my kingdom?"

"No, no, papa; not so much as that. It's a little bit of my own way that I want."

"Of course; well, what is it?"

"Well, I want you to take John back again."

Her father's face grew hard.

"Now, please, papa, don't say a word till you have heard me. John was a capital gardener; he kept the greenhouse looking beautiful; and this Mike that we've got now, he's nothing but an apprentice, and stupid as an owl at that! He'll never do in the world."

"All that is very true," said Mr. De Witt, "but *John drinks*, and I *won't have a drinking man*."

"But, papa, *I* mean to take care of that. I've written out the temperance pledge, and dated it, and got John to sign it, and *here it is*," and she handed the paper to her father, who read it carefully, and sat turning it in his hands while his daughter went on:

"You ought to have seen how poor, how very poor they were. His wife is such a nice, quiet, hard-working woman, and has two such pretty children. I went to see them and carry them Christmas things yesterday, but it's no good doing anything if John can't get work. She told me how the poor fellow had been walking the streets in the cold, day after day, trying everywhere, and nobody would take him. It's a dreadful time now for a man to be out of work, and it isn't fair his poor wife and children should suffer. Do try him again, papa!"

"John always did better with the pine-apples than anybody we have tried," said Mrs. De Witt at this point.

At this moment the door opened, and there was a sound of chirping voices in the hall. "Please, Miss Florence," said Betty, "the little folks says they wants to give you a Christmas." She added in a whisper: "They thinks much of giving you something, poor little things—plaze take it of 'em." And little Tottie at the word marched in and offered the young princess his dear, beautiful, beloved string of glass beads, and Elsie presented the cross of red berries—most dear to her heart and fair to her eyes. "We wanted to give you something," she said bashfully.

"Oh, you lovely dears!" cried Florence; "how sweet of you! I shall keep these beautiful glass beads always, and put the cross up over my dressing-table. I thank you *ever* so much!"

"Are those John's children?" asked Mr. De Witt, winking a tear out of his eye—he was at bottom a soft-hearted old gentleman.

"Yes, papa," said Florence, caressing Elsie's curly hair—"see how sweet they are!"

"Well—you may tell John I'll try him again."

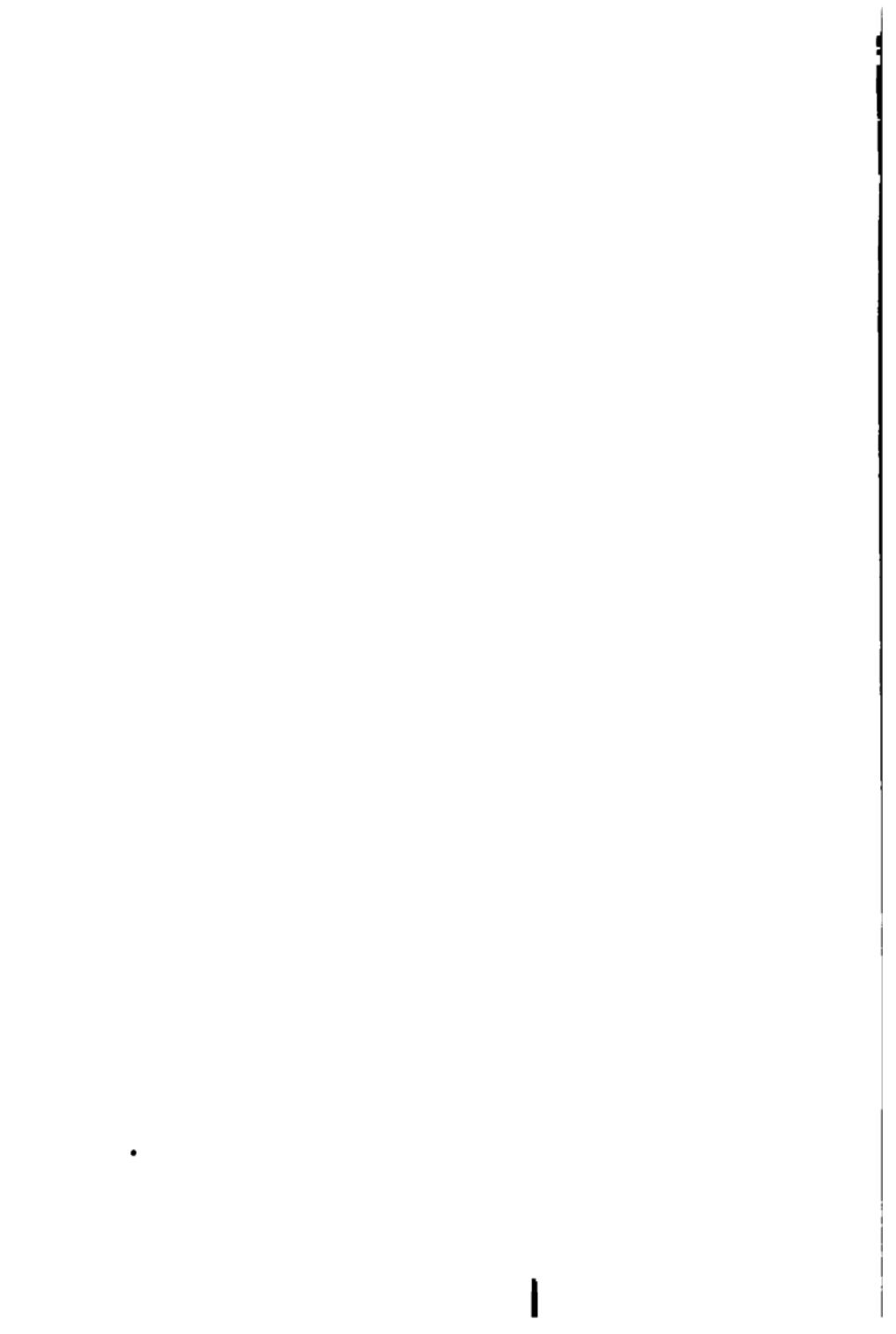
And so passed Florence's Christmas, with a new, warm sense of joy in her heart, a feeling of something in the world to be done, worth doing.

"How much joy one can give with a little money!" she said to herself as she counted over what she had spent on her Christmas. Ah yes! and how true that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." A shining, invisible hand was laid on her head in blessing as she lay down that night, and a sweet sense of a loving presence stole like music into her soul. Unknown to herself, she had that day taken the first step out of self-life into that life of love and care for others which brought the King of Glory down to share earth's toils and sorrows. And that precious experience was Christ's Christmas gift to her.



LET EVERY MAN MIND HIS OWN
BUSINESS.







LET EVERY MAN MIND HIS OWN BUSINESS.

“ **A**ND so you will not sign this paper!” said Alfred Melton to his cousin, a fine-looking young man, who was lounging by the centre-table.

“ Not I, indeed. What in life have I to do with these decidedly vulgar temperance pledges? Pshaw! they have a relish of whisky in their very essence!”

“ Come, come, Cousin Melton,” said a brilliant, dark-eyed girl, who had been lolling on the sofa during the conference, “ I beg of you to give over attempting to evangelize Edward. You see, as Falstaff has it, ‘ he is little better than one of the wicked.’ You must not waste such valuable temperance documents on him.”

“ But, seriously, Melton, my good fellow,” re-

sumed Edward, "this signing, and sealing, and pledging is altogether an unnecessary affair for me. My past and present habits, my situation in life—in short, everything that can be mentioned with regard to me, goes against the supposition of my ever becoming the slave of a vice so debasing; and this pledging myself to avoid it is something altogether needless—nay, by implication, it is degrading. As to what you say of my influence, I am inclined to the opinion, that if every man will look to himself every man will be looked to. This modern notion of tacking the whole responsibility of society on to every individual is one I am not at all inclined to adopt; for first, I know it is troublesome doctrine; and, secondly, I doubt if it be a true one. For both which reasons I shall decline extending it my patronage."

"Well, positively," exclaimed the lady, "you gentlemen have the gift of continuance in an uncommon degree. You have discussed this matter backward and forward till I am ready to perish. I will take the matter in hand myself, and sign a temperance pledge for Edward, and see that he gets into none of those naughty courses upon which you have been so pathetic."

"I dare say," said Melton, glancing on her brilliant face with evident admiration, "that you will

be the best temperance pledge he could have. But every man, cousin, may not be so fortunate."

"But, Melton," said Edward, "seeing my steady habits are so well provided for, you must carry your logic and eloquence to some poor fellow less favoured." And thus the conference ended.

"What a good, disinterested fellow Melton is!" said Edward, after he had left.

"Yes, good as the day is long," said Augusta, "but rather prosy after all. This tiresome temperance business! One never hears the end of it now-a-days. Temperance papers—temperance tracts—temperance hotels—temperance this, that, and the other thing, even down to temperance pocket-handkerchiefs for little boys! Really, the world is getting intemperately temperate."

"Ah, well! with the security you have offered, Augusta, I shall dread no temptation."

Though there was nothing peculiar in these words, yet there was a certain earnestness of tone that called the colour into the face of Augusta, and set her to sewing with uncommon assiduity. And thereupon Edward proceeded with some remark about "guardian angels," together with many other things of the kind, which, though they contain no more that is new than a temperance lecture, always seem to have a peculiar

freshness to people in certain circumstances. In fact, before the hour was at an end Edward and Augusta had forgotten where they began, and had wandered far into that land of anticipations and bright dreams which surrounds the young and loving before they eat of the tree of experience, and gain the fatal knowledge of good and evil.

But here, stopping our sketching pencil, let us throw in a little back-ground and perspective, that will enable our readers to perceive more readily the entire picture.

Edward Howard was a young man whose brilliant talents and captivating manners had placed him first in the society in which he moved. Though without property or weight of family connections, he had become a leader in the circles where these appendages are most considered, and there were none of their immunities and privileges that were not freely at his disposal.

Augusta Elmore was conspicuous in all that lies within the sphere of feminine attainment. She was an orphan, and accustomed from a very early age to the free enjoyment and control of an independent property. This circumstance doubtless added to the magic of her personal graces in procuring for her that flattering deference which beauty and wealth secure.

Her mental powers were naturally superior, although, from want of motive, they had received no development, except such as would secure success in society. Native good sense, with great strength of feeling and independence of mind, had saved her from becoming heartless and frivolous. She was better fitted to lead and to influence than to be influenced or led. And hence, though not swayed by any habitual sense of moral responsibility, the tone of her character seemed altogether more elevated than the average of fashionable society.

General expectation had united the destiny of these two persons, who seemed every way fitted for each other, and for once general expectation did not err. A few months after the interview mentioned were witnessed the festivities and congratulations of their brilliant and happy marriage.

Never did two young persons commence life under happier auspices. "What an exact match!" "What a beautiful couple!" said all the gossips. "They seem made for each other," said every one; and so thought the happy lovers themselves.

Love, which with persons of strong character is always an earnest and sobering principle, had made them thoughtful and considerate, and as they looked forward to future life, and talked of the

days before them, their plans and ideas were as rational as any plans can be, when formed entirely with reference to this life, without any regard to another.

For a while their absorbing attachment to each other tended to withdraw them from the temptations and allurements of company, and many a long winter evening passed delightfully in the elegant quietude of home, as they read, sang, talked of the past, and dreamed of the future in each other's society. But, contradictory as it may appear to the theory of the sentimental, it is nevertheless a fact, that two persons cannot always find sufficient excitement in talking to each other merely; and this is especially true of those to whom high excitement has been a necessary of life. After a while the young couple, though loving each other none the less, began to respond to the many calls which invited them again into society, and the pride they felt in each other added zest to the pleasures of their return.

As the gaze of admiration followed the graceful motions of the beautiful wife, and the whispered tribute went round the circle whenever she entered, Edward felt a pride beyond all that flattery, addressed to himself, had ever excited; and Augusta, when told of the convivial talents and powers of

entertainment which distinguished her husband, could not resist the temptation of urging him into society even oftener than his own wishes would have led him.

Alas! neither of them knew the perils of constant excitement, nor supposed that, in thus alienating themselves from the pure and simple pleasures of home, they were risking their whole capital of happiness. It is in indulging the first desire of extra stimulus that the first and deepest danger to domestic peace lies. Let that stimulus be either bodily or mental, its effects are alike to be dreaded.

The man or the woman to whom habitual excitement of any kind has become essential has taken the first step towards ruin. In the case of a woman it leads to discontent, fretfulness, and dissatisfaction with the quiet duties of domestic life; in the case of a man it leads almost invariably to animal stimulus, ruinous alike to the powers of body and mind.

Augusta, fondly trusting to the virtue of her husband, saw no danger in the constant round of engagements which were gradually drawing his attention from the graver cares of business, the pursuit of self-improvement, and the love of herself. Already there was in her horizon the cloud

"as big as a man's hand"—the precursor of future darkness and tempest; but, too confident and buoyant, she saw it not.

It was not until the cares and duties of a mother began to confine her at home that she first felt, with a startling sensation of fear, that there was an alteration in her husband, though even then the change was so shadowy and indefinite that it could not be defined by words.

It was known by that quick, prophetic sense which reveals to the heart of woman the first variation in the pulse of affection, though it be so slight that no other touch can detect it.

Edward was still fond, affectionate, admiring; and when he tendered her all the little attentions demanded by her situation, or caressed and praised his beautiful son, she felt satisfied and happy. But when she saw that even without her the convivial circle had its attractions, and that he could leave her to join it, she sighed, she scarce knew why. "Surely," she said, "I am not so selfish as to wish to rob him of pleasure because I cannot enjoy it with him. But yet, once he told me there was no pleasure where I was not. Alas! is it true, what I have so often heard, that such feelings cannot always last?"

Poor Augusta! she knew not how deep reason

she had to fear. She saw not the temptations that surrounded her husband in the circle where, to all the stimulus of wit and intellect, was often added the zest of *wine*, used far too freely for safety.

Already had Edward become familiar with a degree of physical excitement which touches the very verge of intoxication; yet, strong in self-confidence, and deluded by the customs of society, he dreamed not of danger. The traveller who has passed above the rapids of Niagara may have noticed the spot where the first white sparkling ripple announces the downward tendency of the waters. All here is brilliancy and beauty; and as the waters ripple and dance in the sunbeam they seem only as if inspired by a spirit of new life, and not as hastening to a dreadful fall. So the first approach to intemperance, that ruins both body and soul, seems only like the buoyancy and exulting freshness of a new life, and the unconscious voyager feels his bark undulating with a thrill of delight, ignorant of the inexorable hurry, the tremendous sweep, with which the laughing waters urge him on beyond the reach of hope or recovery.

It was at this period in the life of Edward that one judicious and manly friend, who would have had the courage to point out to him the danger

that every one else perceived, might have saved him. But among the circle of his acquaintances there was none such. "*Let every man mind his own business*" was their universal maxim. True, heads were gravely shaken, and Mr. A. regretted to Mr. B. that so promising a young man seemed about to ruin himself. But one was "*no relation*" of Edward's, and the other "*felt a delicacy* in speaking on such a subject," and, therefore, according to a very ancient precedent, they "*passed by on the other side.*" Yet it was at Mr. A.'s sideboard, always sparkling with the choicest wine, that he had felt the first excitement of extra stimulus; it was at Mr. B.'s house that the convivial club began to hold their meetings, which after a time found a more appropriate place in a public hotel. It is thus that the sober, the regular, and the discreet, whose constitution saves them from liabilities to excess, will accompany the ardent and excitable to the very verge of danger, and then wonder at their want of self-control.

It was a cold winter evening, and the wind whistled drearily around the closed shutters of the parlour in which Augusta was sitting. Everything around her bore the marks of elegance and comfort. Splendid books and engravings lay about in every direction. Vases of rare and costly flowers exhaled



perfume, and magnificent mirrors multiplied every object. All spoke of luxury and repose, save the anxious countenance of its mistress.

It was late, and she had watched anxiously for her husband for many long hours. She drew out her gold and diamond repeater, and looked at it. It was long past midnight. She sighed as she remembered the pleasant evenings they had passed together, as her eye fell on the books they had read together, and on her piano and harp, now silent, and thought of all he had said and looked in those days when each was all to the other.

She was aroused from this melancholy reverie by a loud knocking at the street door. She hastened to open it, but started back at the sight it disclosed—her husband borne by four men.

“Dead! is he dead?” she screamed in agony.

“No, ma’am,” said one of the men, “but he might as well be dead as in such a state as this.”

The whole truth, in all its degradation, flashed on the mind of Augusta. Without a question or comment she motioned to the sofa in the parlour, and her husband was laid there. She locked the street door, and when the last retreating footstep had died away she turned to the sofa, and stood gazing in fixed and almost stupified silence on the face of her senseless husband.

At once she realized the whole of her fearful lot. She saw before her the blight of her own affections, the ruin of her helpless children, the disgrace and misery of her husband. She looked around her in helpless despair, for she well knew the power of the vice whose deadly seal was set upon her husband. As one who is struggling and sinking in the waters casts a last dizzy glance at the green sunny banks and distant trees which seem sliding from his view, so did the scenes of her happy days pass in a moment before her, and she groaned aloud in bitterness of spirit. "Great God, help me—help me!" she prayed. "Save him—oh, save my husband!"

Augusta was a woman of no common energy of spirit, and when the first wild burst of anguish was over she resolved not to be wanting to her husband and children in a crisis so dreadful.

"When he wakes," she mentally exclaimed, "I will warn and implore; I will pour out my whole soul to save him. My poor husband, you have been misled—betrayed. But you are too good—too generous—too noble to be sacrificed without a struggle."

It was late the next morning before the stupor in which Edward was plunged began to pass off. He slowly opened his eyes, started up wildly,

gazed hurriedly around the room, till his eye met the fixed and sorrowful gaze of his wife. The past instantly flashed upon him, and a deep flush passed over his countenance. There was a dead, a solemn silence, until Augusta, yielding to her agony, threw herself into his arms, and wept.

“Then you do not hate me, Augusta?” said he, sorrowfully.

“Hate you—never! but oh, Edward—Edward, what has beguiled you?”

“My wife! you once promised to be my guardian in virtue—such you are, and will be. Oh, Augusta! you have looked on what you shall never see again—never—never, so help me, God!” said he, looking up with solemn earnestness.

And Augusta, as she gazed on the noble face, the ardent expression of sincerity and remorse, could not doubt that her husband was saved. But Edward’s plan of reformation had one grand defect. It was merely modification and retrenchment, and not *entire abandonment*. He could not feel it necessary to cut himself off entirely from the scenes and associations where temptation had met him. He considered not that when the temperate flow of the blood and the even balance of the nerves have once been destroyed, there is, ever after, a double and fourfold liability, which often

makes a man the sport of the first untoward chance. He still contrived to stimulate sufficiently to prevent the return of a calm and healthy state of mind and body, and to make constant self-control and watchfulness necessary.

It is a great mistake to call nothing intemperance but that degree of physical excitement which completely overthrows the mental powers. There is a state of nervous excitability, resulting from what is often called moderate stimulation, which often long precedes this, and is, in regard to it, like the premonitory warnings of the fatal cholera, an unsuspected draught on the vital powers, from which, at any moment, they may sink into irre-mediable collapse.

It is in this state often that the spirit of gambling or of wild speculation is induced by the morbid cravings of an over-stimulated system. Unsatisfied with the healthy and regular routine of business, and the laws of gradual and solid prosperity, the excited and unsteady imagination leads its subjects to daring risks, with the alternative of unbounded gain on the one side, or of utter ruin on the other. And when, as is too often the case, that ruin comes, unrestrained and desperate intemperance is the wretched resort to allay the ravings of disappointment and despair.

Such was the case with Edward. He had lost his interest in his regular business, and he embarked the bulk of his property in a brilliant scheme then in vogue; and when he found a crisis coming, threatening ruin and beggary, he had recourse to the fatal stimulus, which, alas! he had never wholly abandoned.

At this time he spent some months in a distant city, separated from his wife and family, while the insidious power of temptation daily increased as he kept up, by artificial stimulus, the flagging vigour of his mind and nervous system.

It came at last—the blow which shattered alike his brilliant dreams and his real prosperity. The large fortune brought by his wife vanished in a moment, so that scarcely a pittance was left in his hands. From the distant city where he had been to superintend his schemes he thus wrote to his too confiding wife:—“Augusta, all is over! expect no more from your husband—believe no more of his promises—for he is lost to you and to himself. Augusta, our property is gone; *your* property, which I have blindly risked, is all swallowed up. But is that the worst? No, no, Augusta, I am lost—lost, body and soul, and as irretrievably as the perishing riches I have squandered. Once I had energy—health—nerve—resolution; but all

are gone: yea, yes, I have yielded—I do yield daily to what is at once my tormentor and my temporary refuge from intolerable misery. You remember the sad hour you first knew your husband was a drunkard. Your look on that morning of misery—shall I ever forget it! Yet, blind and confiding as you were, how soon did your ill-judged confidence in me return. Vain hopes! I was even then past recovery—even then sealed over to blackness of darkness for ever!

“Alas! my wife, my peerless wife, why am I your husband? why the father of such children as you have given me? Is there nothing in your unequalled loveliness—nothing in the innocence of our helpless babes, that is powerful enough to recall me?—no, there is not.

“Augusta, you know not the dreadful gnawing, the intolerable agony of this master passion. I walk the floor—I think of my own dear home, my high hopes, my proud expectations, my children, my treasured wife, my own immortal spirit—I feel that I am sacrificing all—feel it till I am withered with agony; but the hour comes—the burning hour, and *all is in vain*. I shall return to you no more, Augusta. All the little wreck I have saved, I send: you have friends, relatives—above all, you have an energy of mind, a capacity of

resolute action, beyond that of ordinary women, and you shall never be bound—the living to the dead. True, you will suffer, thus to burst the bonds that unite us; but be resolute, for you will suffer more to watch from day to day the slow workings of death and ruin in your husband. Would you stay with me, to see every vestige of what you once loved passing away; to endure the caprice, the moroseness, the delirious anger of one no longer master of himself? Would you make your children victims and fellow-sufferers with you? No! dark and dreadful is my path! I will walk it alone: no one shall go with me.

“In some peaceful retirement you may concentrate your strong feelings upon your children, and bring them up to fill a place in your heart which a worthless husband has abandoned. If I leave you now, you will remember me as I have been—you will love me and weep for me when dead; but if you stay with me, your love will be worn out; I shall become the object of disgust and loathing. Therefore farewell, my wife—my first, best love, farewell! with you I part with hope,

“And, with hope, farewell fear,
Farewell remorse: all good to me is lost:
Evil, be thou my good.’

This is a wild strain, but fit for me: do not seek for me, do not write: nothing can save me."

Thus abruptly began and ended the letter that conveyed to Augusta the death-doom of her hopes. There are moments of agony when the most worldly heart is pressed upward to God, even as a weight will force upward the reluctant water. Augusta had been a generous, a high-minded, an affectionate woman, but she had lived entirely for this world. Her chief good had been her husband and her children. These had been her pride, her reliance, her dependence. Strong in her own resources, she had never felt the need of looking to a higher power for assistance and happiness. But when this letter fell from her trembling hand her heart died within her at its wild and reckless bitterness.

In her desperation she looked up to God. "What have I to live for now?" was the first feeling of her heart.

But she repressed this inquiry of selfish agony, and besought the Almighty assistance to nerve her weakness; and here first began that practical acquaintance with the truths and hopes of religion which changed her whole character.

The possibility of blind, confiding idolatry of any earthly object was swept away by the fall of her

husband, and with the full energy of a decided and desolate spirit she threw herself on the protection of an almighty Helper. She followed her husband to the city whither he had gone, found him, and vainly attempted to save him.

There were the usual alternations of short-lived reformations, exciting hopes only to be destroyed. There was the gradual sinking of the body, the decay of moral feeling and principle—the slow but sure approach of disgusting animalism, which marks the progress of the drunkard.

It was some years after that a small and partly ruinous tenement in the outskirts of A—— received a new family. The group consisted of four children, whose wan and wistful countenances, and still, unchildlike deportment, testified an early acquaintance with want and sorrow. There was the mother, faded and care-worn, whose dark and melancholy eyes, pale cheeks, and compressed lips, told of years of anxiety and endurance. There was the father, with haggard face, unsteady step, and that callous, reckless air, that betrayed long familiarity with degradation and crime. Who that had seen Edward Howard in the morning and freshness of his days, could have recognized him in this miserable husband and father; or who, in this worn and woe-stricken woman, would have

known the beautiful, brilliant, and accomplished Augusta? Yet such changes are not fancy, as many a bitter and broken heart can testify.

Augusta had followed her guilty husband through many a change and many a weary wandering. All hope of reformation had gradually faded away. Her own eyes had seen, her ears had heard, all those disgusting details, too revolting to be portrayed; for in drunkenness there is no royal road—no salvo for greatness of mind, refinement of taste, or tenderness of feeling. All alike are merged in the corruption of a moral death.

The traveller who met Edward reeling by the roadside was sometimes startled to hear the fragments of classical lore, or wild bursts of half-remembered poetry, mixing strangely with the imbecile merriment of intoxication. But when he stopped to gaze, there was no farther mark on his face or in his eye by which he could be distinguished from the loathsome and lowest drunkard.

Augusta had come with her husband to a city where they were wholly unknown, that she might at least escape the degradation of their lot in the presence of those who had known them in better days. The long and dreadful struggle that



annihilated the hopes of this life had raised her feelings to rest upon the next, and the habit of communion with God, induced by sorrows which nothing else could console, had given a tender dignity to her character such as nothing else could bestow.

It is true, she deeply loved her children, but it was with a holy chastened love, such as inspired the sentiment once breathed by Him "who was made perfect through sufferings,"—

"For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified."

Poverty, deep poverty, had followed their steps, but yet she had not fainted. Talents, which in her happier days had been nourished merely as luxuries, were now stretched to the utmost to furnish a support; while from the resources of her own reading she drew that which laid the foundation for early mental culture in her children.

Augusta had been here but a few weeks before her footsteps were traced by her only brother, who had lately discovered her situation, and urged her to forsake her unworthy husband and find refuge with him.

"Augusta, my sister, I have found you!" he exclaimed, as he suddenly entered one day,

while she was busied with the work of her family.

“Henry, my dear brother!” There was a momentary illumination of countenance accompanying these words, which soon faded into a mournful quietness as she cast her eyes around on the scanty accommodations and mean apartment.

“I see how it is, Augusta; step by step, you are sinking—dragged down by a vain sense of duty to one no longer worthy. I cannot bear it any longer, I have come to take you away.”

Augusta turned from him, and looked abstractedly out of the window. Her features settled in thought. Their expression gradually deepened from their usual tone of mild resigned sorrow to one of keen anguish.

“Henry,” said she, turning towards him, “never was mortal woman so blessed in another as I once was in him. How can I forget it? Who knew him in those days that did not admire and love him! They tempted and ensnared him; and even I urged him into the path of danger. He fell, and there was none to help. I urged reformation, and he again and again promised, resolved, and began. But again they tempted him—even his very best friends; yes, and that, too, when they knew his danger. They led him on as far as it was safe for

them to go, and when the sweep of his more excitable temperament took him past the point of safety and decency, they stood by and coolly wondered and lamented. How often was he led on by such heartless friends to humiliating falls, and then driven to desperation by the cold look, averted faces, and cruel sneers of those whose medium temperament and cooler blood saved them from the snares which they saw were enslaving him! What if *I* had forsaken him *then*? What account should I have rendered to God? Every time a friend has been alienated by his comrades it has seemed to seal him with another seal. I am his wife—and mine will be *the last*. Henry, when I leave him, I *know* his eternal ruin is sealed. I cannot do it now; a little longer—a little longer; the hour, I see, must come. I know my duty to my children forbids me to keep them there;—take them—they are my last earthly comforts, Henry—but you must take them away. It may be—O God—perhaps it *must be*, that I shall soon follow; but not till I have tried *once more*. What is this present life to one who has suffered as I have? Nothing. But eternity! Oh, Henry! eternity—how can I abandon him to *everlasting* despair! Under the breaking of my heart I have borne up. I have borne up under

all that can try a woman; but this thought— She stopped, and seemed struggling with herself; but at last, borne down by a tide of agony, she leaned her head on her hands; the tears streamed through her fingers, and her whole frame shook with convulsive sobs.

Her brother wept with her; nor dared he again to touch the point so solemnly guarded. The next day Augusta parted from her children, hoping something from feelings that, possibly, might be stirred by their absence in the bosom of their father.

It was about a week after this that Augusta one evening presented herself at the door of a rich Mr. L—, whose princely mansion was one of the ornaments of the city of A—. It was not till she reached the sumptuous drawing-room that she recognized in Mr. L— one whom she and her husband had frequently met in the gay circles of their early life. Altered as she was, Mr. L— did not recognize her, but compassionately handed her a chair, and requested her to wait the return of his lady, who was out; and then turning, he resumed his conversation with another gentleman.

“Now, Dallas,” said he, “you are altogether excessive and intemperate in this matter. Society is not to be reformed by every man directing his

efforts towards his neighbour, but by every man taking care of himself. It is you and I, my dear sir, who must begin with ourselves, and every other man must do the same; and then society will be effectually reformed. Now this modern way, by which every man considers it his duty to attend to the spiritual matters of his next-door neighbour, is taking the business at the wrong end altogether. It makes a vast deal of appearance, but it does very little good."

"But suppose your neighbour feels no disposition to attend to his own improvement—what then?"

"Why, then it is his own concern, and not mine. What my Maker requires is that I do *my* duty, and not fret about my neighbour's."

"But, my friend, that is the very question. What is the duty your Maker requires? Does it not include some regard to your neighbour, some care and thought for his interest and improvement?"

"Well, well, I do that by setting a good example. I do not mean by example what you do—that is, that I am to stop drinking wine because it may lead him to drink brandy, any more than that I must stop eating because he may eat too much and become a dyspeptic—but that I am to use my wine,

and everything else, temperately and decently, and thus set him a good example."

The conversation was here interrupted by the return of Mrs. L——. It recalled, in all its freshness, to the mind of Augusta the days when both she and her husband had thus spoken and thought.

Ah, how did these sentiments appear to her now, lonely, helpless, forlorn—the wife of a ruined husband—the mother of more than orphan children! How different from what they seemed when, secure in ease, in wealth, in gratified affections, she thoughtlessly echoed the common phraseology, "Why must people concern themselves so much in their neighbour's affairs? Let every man mind his own business."

Augusta received in silence from Mrs. L—— the fine sewing for which she came, and left the room.

"Ellen," said Mr. L—— to his wife, "that poor woman must be in trouble of some kind or other. You must go sometime and see if anything can be done for her."

"How singular!" said Mrs. L——; "she reminds me all the time of Augusta Howard. You remember her, my dear?"

"Yes, poor thing! and her husband too. That was a shocking affair of Edward Howard's. I hear

that he became an intemperate, worthless fellow. Who could have thought it?"

"But you recollect, my dear," said Mrs. L——, "I predicted it six months before it was talked of. You remember, at the wine-party which you gave after Mary's wedding, he was so excited that he was hardly decent. I mentioned then that he was getting into dangerous ways. But he was such an excitable creature that two or three glasses would put him quite beside himself. And there is George Eldon, who takes off his ten or twelve glasses, and no one suspects it."

"Well, it was a great pity," replied Mr. L——; "Howard was worth a dozen George Eldons."

"Do you suppose," said Dallas, who had listened thus far in silence, "that if he had moved in a circle where it was the universal custom to *banish all stimulating drinks* he would thus have fallen?"

"I cannot say," said Mr. L——; "perhaps not."

Mr. Dallas was a gentleman of fortune and leisure, and of an ardent and enthusiastic temperament. Whatever engaged him absorbed his whole soul; and of late years his mind had become deeply engaged in schemes of philanthropy for the improvement of his fellow-men. He had, in his benevolent ministrations, often passed the dwelling of Edward, and was deeply interested in the

pale and patient wife and mother. He made acquaintance with her through the aid of her children, and in one way and another learned particulars of their history that awakened the deepest interest and concern. None but a mind as sanguine as his would have dreamed of attempting to remedy such hopeless misery by the reformation of him who was its cause. But such a plan had actually occurred to him. The remarks of Mr. and Mrs. L—— recalled the idea, and he soon found that his projected protégé was the very Edward Howard whose early history was thus disclosed. He learned all the minutiae from these his early associates without disclosing his aim, and left them still more resolved upon his benevolent plan.

He watched his opportunity when Edward was free from the influence of stimulus, and it was just after the loss of his children had called forth some remains of his better nature. Gradually and kindly he tried to touch the springs of his mind and awaken some of its buried sensibilities.

“It is in vain, Mr. Dallas, to talk thus to me,” said Edward, when one day, with the strong eloquence of excited feeling, he painted the motives for attempting reformation; “you might as well try to reclaim the lost in hell. Do you think,” he continued, in a wild, determined manner, “do



you think I do not know all you can tell me? I have it all by heart, sir; no one can preach such discourses as I can on this subject; I know all—believe all—as the devils believe and tremble."

"Ay, but," said Mr. Dallas, "to you *there is hope*; you *are not* to ruin yourself for ever."

"And who the devil are you, to speak to me in this way?" said Edward, looking up from his sul- len despair, with a gleam of curiosity if not of hope.

"God's messenger to you, Edward Howard," said Mr. Dallas, fixing his keen eye upon him solemnly; "to you, Edward Howard, who have thrown away talents, hope, and health—who have blasted the heart of your wife, and beggared your suffering children. To you I am the messenger of your God—by me he offers health, and hope, and self-respect, and the regard of your fellow-men. You may heal the broken heart of your wife, and give back a father to your helpless chil- dren. Think of it, Howard: what if it were pos- sible? only suppose it. What would it be again to feel yourself a man, beloved and respected as you once were, with a happy home, a cheerful wife, and smiling little ones? Think how you could repay your poor wife for all her tears! What hinders you from gaining all this?"

"Just what hindered the rich man in hell—*'between us there is a great gulf fixed.'* it lies between me and all that is good; my wife, my children, my hope of heaven are all on the other side."

"Ay, but this gulf can be passed: Howard, what would you give to be a temperate man?"

"What would I give?" said Howard—he thought for a moment, and burst into tears.

"Ah! I see how it is," said Mr. Dallas; "you need a friend, and God has sent you one."

"What can you do for me, Mr. Dallas?" said Edward, in a tone of wonder at the confidence of his assurances.

"I will tell you what I can do: I can take you to my house and give you a room, and watch over you till the strongest temptations are past—I can give you business again. I can do *all* for you that needs to be done, if you will give yourself to my care."

"Oh, God of mercy!" exclaimed the unhappy man, "is there hope for me? I cannot believe it possible; but take me where you choose—I will follow and obey."

A few hours witnessed the transfer of the lost husband to one of the retired apartments in the elegant mansion of Mr. Dallas, where he found his

anxious and grateful wife still stationed as his watchful guardian.

Medical treatment, healthful exercise, useful employment, simple food, and pure water were connected with a personal supervision by Mr. Dallas, which, while gently and politely sustained, at first amounted to actual imprisonment.

For a time the reaction from the sudden suspension of habitual stimulus was dreadful, and even with tears did the unhappy man entreat to be permitted to abandon the undertaking. But the resolute steadiness of Mr. Dallas, and the tender entreaties of his wife, prevailed. It is true that he might be said to be saved "so as by fire;" for a fever, and a long and fierce delirium, wasted him almost to the borders of the grave.

But at length the struggle between life and death was over, and though it left him stretched on the bed of sickness, emaciated and weak, yet he was restored to his right mind, and was conscious of returning health. Let any one who has laid a friend in the grave, and known what it is to have the heart fail with longing for them day by day, imagine the dreamy and unreal joy of Augusta when she began again to see in Edward the husband so long lost to her. It was as if the grave had given back the dead!

"Augusta!" said he, faintly, as, after a long and quiet sleep, he awoke free from delirium. She bent over him. "Augusta, I am redeemed—I am saved—I feel in myself that I am made whole."

The high heart of Augusta melted at these words. She trembled and wept. Her husband wept also, and after a pause he continued:

"It is more than being restored to this life—I feel that it is the beginning of eternal life. It is the Saviour who sought me out, and I know that he is able to keep me from falling."

But we will draw a veil over a scene which words have little power to paint.

"Pray, Dallas," said Mr. L_____, one day, "who is that fine-looking young man whom I met in your office this morning? I thought his face seemed familiar."

"It is a Mr. Howard—a young lawyer whom I have lately taken into business with me."

"Strange! impossible!" said Mr. L_____. "Surely this cannot be the Howard that I once knew!"

"I believe he is," said Mr. Dallas.

"Why, I thought he was gone—dead and ruined, long ago, with intemperance."

"He was so; few have ever sunk lower; but he

now promises even to outdo all that was hoped of him."

"Strange! Why, Dallas, what did bring about this change?"

"I feel a delicacy in mentioning how it came about to you, Mr. L——, as there undoubtedly was a great deal of 'interference with other men's matters' in the business. In short, the young man fell in the way of one of those meddlesome fellows who go prowling about, distributing tracts, forming temperance societies, and all that sort of stuff."

"Come, come, Dallas," said Mr. L——, smiling, "I must hear the story for all that."

"First call with me at this house," said Dallas, stopping before the door of a neat little house. They were soon in the parlour. The first sight that met their eyes was Edward Howard, who, with a cheek glowing with exercise, was tossing aloft a blooming boy, while Augusta was watching his motions, her face radiant with smiles.

"Mr. and Mrs. Howard, this is Mr. L——, an old acquaintance, I believe."

There was a moment of mutual embarrassment and surprise, soon dispelled, however, by the frank cordiality of Edward. Mr. L—— sat down, but could scarce withdraw his eyes from

the countenance of Augusta, in whose eloquent face he recognized a beauty of a higher cast than even in her earlier days.

He glanced about the apartment. It was simply but tastefully furnished, and wore an air of retired domestic comfort. There were books, engravings, and musical instruments. Above all, there were four happy, healthy-looking children, pursuing studies or sports at the further end of the room.

After a short visit they regained the street.

"Dallas, you are a happy man," said Mr. L—; "that family will be a mine of jewels to you."

He was right. Every soul saved from pollution and ruin is a jewel to him that reclaims it, whose lustre only eternity can disclose; and therefore it is written, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever."

BOLTON AND HIS FRIENDS.







BOLTON AND HIS FRIENDS.

“**J**ENDERSON,” said Bolton to me one day, “how long are you engaged on the *Democracy*?”

“Only for this year,” said I.

“Because,” said he, “I have something to propose to you which I hope may prove a better thing. Hestermann & Co. sent for me yesterday in secret session. The head manager of their whole set of magazines and papers has resigned, and is going to travel in Europe, and they want me to take the place.”

“Good! I am heartily glad of it,” said I. “I always felt that you were not in the position that you ought to have. You will accept, of course.”

“Whether I accept or not depends on *you*,” he replied.

“I cannot understand,” said I.

"In short, then," said he, "the responsibility is a heavy one, and I cannot undertake it without a partner whom I can trust as myself—I mean," he added, "whom I can trust *more* than myself."

"You are a thousand times too good," said I. "I should like nothing better than such a partnership, but I feel oppressed by your good opinion. Are you sure that I am the one for you?"

"I think I am," said he, "and it is a case where I am the best judge; and it offers to you just what you want—a stable position, independence to express yourself, and a good income. Hestermann & Co. are rich, and wise enough to know that liberality is the best policy."

"But," said I, "their offers are made to you, and not to me."

"Well, of course, their acquaintance with me is of old standing; but I have spoken to them of you, and I am to bring you round to talk with them to-morrow; but, after all, the whole power of arranging is left with me. They put a certain sum at my disposal, and I do what I please with it. In short," he said smiling, "I hold the living, and you are my curate. Well," he added, "of course you need time to think matters over; here is paper on which I have made a little memorandum of an

arrangement between us; take it and dream on it, and let me know to-morrow what you think of it."

I went to my room and unfolded the agreement, and found the terms liberal beyond all my expectations. In fact, the income of the principal was awarded to me, and that of the subordinate to Bolton.

I took the paper the next evening to Bolton's room.

"Look here, Bolton," said I, "these terms are simply absurd."

"How so?" he said, lifting his eyes tranquilly from his book. "What's the matter with them?"

"Why, you give me all the income."

"Wait till you see how I'll work you," he said, smiling. "I'll get it out of you; you see if I don't."

"But you leave yourself nothing?"

"I have as much as I would have, and that's enough. I'm a literary monk, you know, with no family but Puss and Stumpy, poor fellow, and I need the less."

Stumpy upon this pricked up his ragged ears with an expression of lively satisfaction, sat back on his haunches, and rapped the floor with his forlorn bit of a tail.

“Poor Stumpy,” said Bolton, “you don’t know that you are the homeliest dog in New York, do you? Well, *as far as you go*, you are perfect goodness, Stumpy, though you are no beauty.”

Upon this high praise Stumpy seemed so elated that he stood on his hind-paws, and rested his rough fore-feet on Bolton’s knee, and looked up with eyes of admiration.

“Man is the dog’s god,” said Bolton. “I can’t conceive how any man can be rude to his dog. A dog,” he added, fondling his ragged cur, “why, he’s nothing but organized love—love on four feet, encased in fur, and looking piteously out at the eyes—love that would die for you, yet cannot speak—that’s the touching part. Stumpy *longs* to speak; his poor dog’s breast heaves with something he longs to tell me, and can’t. Don’t it, Stumpy?”

As if he understood his master, Stumpy wheezed a doleful whine, and actual tears stood in his eyes.

“Well,” said Bolton, “Stumpy has beautiful eyes; nobody shall deny that—there, there! poor fellow, maybe on the other shore your rough bark will develop into speech; let’s hope so. I confess I’m of the poor Indian’s mind, and hope to meet my dog in the hereafter. Why should so much love go out in nothing? Yes, Stumpy, we’ll meet

in the resurrection, won't we?" Stumpy barked aloud with the greatest animation.

"Bolton, you ought to be a family man," said I. "Why do you take it for granted that you are to be a literary monk, and spend your love on dogs and cats?"

"*You* may get married, Hal, and I'll adopt your children," said Bolton; "that's one reason why I want to establish you. You see one's dogs *will* die, and it breaks one's heart. If *you* had a boy now I'd invest in him."

"And why can't you invest in a boy of your own?"

"Oh, I'm a predestined old bachelor."

"No such thing," I persisted, hardily. "Why do you immure yourself in a den? Why won't you go out into society? Here, ever since I've known you, you have been in this one cave—a New York hermit; yet if you would once begin to go into society, you'd like it."

"You think I haven't tried it; you forget that I am some years older than you are," said Bolton.

"You are a good-looking young fellow yet," said I, "and ought to make the most of yourself. Why should you turn all the advantages into my hands, and keep so little for yourself?"

“It suits me,” said Bolton; “I am lazy—I mean to get the work out of you.”

“That’s all hum,” said I; “you know well enough that you are not lazy; you take delight in work for work’s sake.”

“One reason I am glad of this position,” he said, “is that it gives me a chance to manage matters a little as I want them. For instance, there’s Jim Fellows—I want to make something more than a mad Bohemian of that boy. Jim is one of the wild growths of our New York life; he is a creature of the impulses and the senses, and will be for good or evil according as others use him.”

“He’s capital company,” said I, “but he doesn’t seem to me to have a serious thought on any subject.”

“And yet,” said Bolton, “such is our day and time, that Jim is more likely than you or I to get along in the world. His cap and bells win favour everywhere, and the laugh he raises gives him the privilege of saying anything he pleases. For my part I couldn’t live without Jim. I have a weakness for him. Nothing is so precious to me as a laugh, and, wet or dry, I can always get that out of Jim. He’ll work in admirably with us.”

“One thing must be said for Jim,” said I; “with all his keenness he’s kind-hearted. He never is

witty at the expense of real trouble. As he says, he goes for the under-dog in the fight always, and his cheery, frisky, hit-or-miss morality does many a kind turn for the unfortunate, while he is always ready to help the poor."

"Jim is not of the sort that is going to do the world's thinking for them," said Bolton; "neither will he ever be one of the noble army of martyrs for principle. He is like a lively, sympathetic horse that will keep the step of the team he is harnessed in, and in the department of lively nonsense he'd do us yeoman service. Now-a-days people must have truth whipped up to a white froth or they won't touch it. Jim is a capital egg-beater."

"Yes," said I; "he's like the horse that had the go in him; he'll run any team that he's harnessed in, and if you hold the reins he won't run off the course."

"Then, again," said Bolton, "there's your cousin; there is the editorship of our weekly journal will be just the place for her. You can write and offer it to her."

"Pardon me," said I, maliciously; "since you are acquainted with the lady, why not write and offer it yourself? It would be a good chance to renew your acquaintance."

Bolton's countenance changed, and he remained a moment silent.

"Henderson," he said, "there are very painful circumstances connected with my acquaintance with your cousin. I never wish to meet her or renew my acquaintance with her. Sometime I will tell you why," he added.

The next evening I found on my table the following letter from Bolton:—

"DEAR HENDERSON,—You need feel no hesitancy about accepting in full every advantage in the position I proposed to you, since you may find it weighted with disadvantages and incumbrances you do not dream of. In short, I shall ask of you services for which no money can pay, and till I knew you there was no man in the world of whom I had dared to ask them. I want a friend, courageous, calm, and true, capable of thinking broadly and justly, one superior to ordinary prejudices, who may be to me another and in some hours a stronger self.

"I can fancy your surprise at this language, and yet I have not read you aright if you are not one of a thousand on whom I may rest this hope.

"You often rally me on my lack of enterprise and ambition, on my hermit habits. The truth is,



Henderson, I am a strained and unseaworthy craft, for whom the harbour and shore are the safest quarters. I have lost trust in myself, and dare not put out to sea without feeling the strong hand of a friend with me.

“ I suppose no young fellow ever entered the course of life with more self-confidence. I had splendid health, high spirits, great power of application, and great social powers. I lived freely and carelessly on the abundance of my physical resources. I could ride, and row, and wrestle with the best. I could lead in all social gaieties, yet keep the head of my class, as I did the first two years of my college life. It seems hardly fair to us human beings that we should be so buoyed up with ignorant hope and confidence in the beginning of our life, and that we should be left in our ignorance to make mistakes which no after years can retrieve. I thought I was perfectly sure of myself; I thought my health and strength were inexhaustible, and that I could carry weights that no man else could. The drain of my wide-awake exhausting life upon my nervous system I made up by the insidious use of stimulants. I was like a man habitually overdrawing his capital, and ignorant to what extent. In my third college year this began to tell perceptibly on my nerves.

I was losing self-control, losing my way in life; I was excitable, irritable, impatient of guidance or reproof, and at times horribly depressed. I sought refuge from this depression in social exhilaration, and having lost control of myself became a marked man among the college authorities; in short, I was overtaken in a convivial row, brought under college discipline, and suspended.

"It was at this time that I went into your neighbourhood to study and teach. I found no difficulty in getting the highest recommendations as to scholarship from some of the college officers who were for giving me a chance to recover myself; and for the rest I was thoroughly sobered and determined on a new course. Here commenced my acquaintance with your cousin, and there followed a few months remembered ever since as the purest happiness of my life. I loved her with all there was in me—heart, soul, mind, and strength—with a love which can never die. She also loved me, more perhaps than she dared to say, for she was young, hardly come to full consciousness of herself. She was then scarcely sixteen, ignorant of her own nature, ignorant of life, and almost frightened at the intensity of the feeling which she excited in me, yet she loved me. But before we could arrive at anything like a calm under-

standing her father came between us. He was a trustee of the academy, and a dispute arose between him and me, in which he treated me with an overbearing haughtiness which aroused the spirit of opposition in me. I was in the right, and knew I was, and I defended my course before the other trustees in a manner which won them over to my way of thinking—a victory which he never forgave.

“ Previously to this encounter I had been in the habit of visiting in his family quite intimately. Caroline and I enjoyed that kind of unwatched freedom which the customs of New England allow to young people. I always attended her home from the singing-school and the weekly lectures, and the evening after my encounter with the trustees I did the same. At the door of his house he met us, and as Caroline passed in he stopped me, and briefly saying that my visits there would no longer be permitted, closed the door in my face. I tried to obtain an interview soon after, when he sternly upbraided me as one that had stolen into the village and won their confidence on false pretences, adding that if he and the trustees had known the full history of my college life I should never have been permitted to teach in their village or have access to their families. It was in

vain to attempt a defence to a man determined to take the very worst view of facts which I did not pretend to deny. I knew that I had been irreproachable as to my record in the school, that I had been faithful in my duties, that the majority of parents and pupils were on my side, but I could not deny the harsh facts which he had been enabled to obtain from some secret enemy, and which he thought justified him in saying that he would rather see his daughter in her grave than see her my wife. The next day Caroline did not appear in school. Her father, with prompt energy, took her immediately to an academy fifty miles away.

"I did not attempt to follow her or write to her; a profound sense of discouragement came over me, and I looked on my acquaintance with her with a sort of remorse. The truth bitterly told by an enemy with a vivid power of statement is a tonic oftentimes too strong for one's power of endurance. I never reflected so seriously on the responsibility which a man assumes in awakening the slumbering feelings of a woman, and fixing them on himself. Under the reproaches of Caroline's father I could but regard this as a wrong I had done, and which could be expiated only by leaving her to peace in forgetfulness.

"I resolved that I would never let her hear from

me again till I had fully proved myself to be possessed of such powers of self-control as would warrant me in offering to be the guardian of her happiness.

“But when I set myself to the work I found, what many another does, that I had reckoned without my host. The man who has begun to live and work by artificial stimulant never knows where he stands, and can never count upon himself with any certainty. He lets into his castle a servant who becomes the most tyrannical of masters. He may resolve to turn him out, but will find himself reduced to the condition in which he can neither do with nor without him.

“In short, the use of stimulant to the brain-power brings on a disease in whose paroxysms a man is no more his own master than in the ravings of fever, a disease that few have the knowledge to understand, and for whose manifestations the world has no pity.

“I cannot tell you the dire despair that came upon me when, after repeated falls, bringing remorse and self-upbraiding to me, and drawing upon me the severest reproaches of my friends, the idea at last flashed upon me that I had indeed become the victim of a sort of periodical insanity, in which the power of the will was overwhelmed by a wild

unreasoning impulse. I remember, when a boy, reading an account of a bridal party sailing gaily on the coast of Norway, who were insidiously drawn into the resistless outer whirl of the great Maelström. The horror of the situation was the moment when the ship-master learned that the ship *no longer obeyed the rudder*; the cruelty of it was the gradual manner in which the resistless doom came upon them. The sun still shone, the sky was still blue. The shore, with its green trees and free birds and blooming flowers, was *near* and visible as they went round and round in dizzy whirls, past the church with its peaceful spire, past the home cottages, past the dwellings of friends and neighbours, past parents, brothers, and sisters who stood on the shore warning, and shrieking, and entreating; helpless, hopeless, with bitterness in their souls, with all that made life lovely so near in sight, and yet cut off from it by the swirl of that tremendous fate!

“There have been just such hours to me, in which I have seen the hopes of manhood, the love of woman, the possession of a home, the opportunities for acquisition of name, and position, and property, all within sight, within grasp, yet all made impossible by my knowledge and conscious-

ness of the deadly drift and suction of that invisible whirlpool.

“The more of manliness there yet is left in man in these circumstances the more torture. The more sense of honour, love of reputation, love of friends, conscience in duty, the more anguish. I read once a frightful story of a woman whose right hand was changed to a serpent, which at intervals was roused to fiendish activity, and demanded of her the blood of her nearest and dearest friends. The hideous curse was unappeasable, and the doomed victim spell-bound, powerless to resist. Even so the man who has lost the control of his will is driven to torture those he loves, while he shivers with horror and anguish at the sight.

“I have seen the time when I gave earnest thanks that no woman loved me, that I had no power to poison the life of a wife with the fear, and terror, and lingering agony of watching the slow fulfilment of such a doom.

“It is enough to say that with every advantage of friends, patronage, position—I lost *all*.

“The world is *exigeant*. It demands above everything that every man shall keep step. He who cannot falls to the rear, and is gradually left behind as the army moves on.

"The only profession left to me was one which could avail itself of my lucid intervals.

"The power of clothing thought with language is in our day growing to be a species of talent for which men are willing to pay, and I have been able by this to make myself a name and a place in the world; and, what is more, I hope to do some good in it.

"I have reflected upon my own temptation, endeavouring to divest myself of the horror with which my sense of the suffering and disappointment I have caused my friends inspires me. I have settled in my own mind the limits of human responsibility on this subject, and have come to the conclusion that it is to be regarded precisely as Mary Lamb and Charles Lamb regarded the incursion of the mania which destroyed the peace of their life. A man who undertakes to comprehend and cure himself has to fight his way back alone. Nobody understands, nobody sympathizes with him, nobody helps him—not because the world is unfeeling, but because it is ignorant of the laws which govern this species of insanity.

"It took me, therefore, a great while to form my system of self-cure. I still hope for this. *I*, the sane and sound, *I* hope to provide for the insane and unsound intervals of my life; and my theory

is, briefly, a *total* and *eternal* relinquishment of the poisonous influence, so that nature may have power to organize new and healthy brain-matter, and to remove that which is diseased. Nature will do this in the end, for she is ever merciful; there is always 'forgiveness with her, that she may be feared.' Since you have known me, you have seen that I lived the life of an anchorite, that my hours are regular, that I avoid exciting society, that I labour with uniformity, and that I never touch any stimulating drink. It is a peculiarity of cases like mine that for lengths of time the morbid disease leaves us, and we feel the utmost aversion to anything of the kind. But there is always a danger lying behind the subtle calm. Three or four drops of alcohol, such as form the basis of a tincture which a doctor will order without scruple, will bring back the madness. One five minutes' inadvertence will upset the painful work of years, and carry one away as with a flood. When I did not know this I was constantly falling. Society through all its parts is full of traps and pitfalls for such as I, and the only refuge is in flight.

"It has been part of my rule of life to avoid all responsibilities that might involve others in my liability to failure. It is now a very long time

since I have felt any abnormal symptoms, and if I had not so often been thrown down after such a period of apparent calm, I might fancy my dangers over and myself a sound man.

"The younger Hestermann was a classmate and chum of mine in college, and one whose friendship for me has held on through thick and thin. He has a trust in me that imposes on me a painful sense of responsibility. I would not fail him for a thousand worlds, yet if one of my hours of darkness should come I should fail ignominiously.

"Only one motive determined me to take their offer—it gave me a chance to provide for you and for Caroline.

"I dare do it only through trusting you for a friendship beyond that of the common; in short, for a brotherly kindness such as Charles Lamb showed to Mary his sister. If the curse returns upon me, you must not let me ruin myself and you: you must take me to an asylum till I recover.

"In asking this of you, I am glad to be able to offer what will be to you an independent position, and give you that home and fireside which I may not dare to hope for myself.

"In the end I expect to conquer, either here or hereafter. I believe in the Fatherhood of God,

and that He has a purpose even in letting us blindly stumble through life as we do; and through all my weakness and unworthiness I still hold His hand. I *know* that the whole temptation is one of brain and nerves, and when He chooses He can release me. The poor brain will be cold and still for good and all some day, and *I* shall be free and able to see, I trust, why I have been suffered thus to struggle. After all, *immortality* opens a large hope, that may overpay the most unspeakable bitterness of life.

“ Meanwhile, you can see why I do not wish to be brought into personal relations with the only woman I have ever loved, or ever can love, and whose happiness I fear to put in peril. It is an unspeakable delight and relief to have this power of doing for her, but she must not know of it.

“ Also, let me tell you that you are to me more transparent than you think. It requires only the penetration of friendship to see that you are in love, and that you hesitate and hang back because of an unwillingness to match your fortunes with hers.

“ Let me suggest, do you not owe it as a matter of justice, after so much intimacy has existed, to give her the opportunity to choose between a man and circumstances? If the arrangement between us

goes into effect, you will have a definite position and a settled income. Go to her like a man and lay it before her, and if she is worthy of you she will come to you.

“ ‘He either dreads his fate too much,
Or his desert is small,
Who fears to put it to the touch,
To win or lose it all.’

"God grant you a home and fireside, Harry, and I will be the indulgent uncle in the chimney-corner.—Yours ever, **"BOLTON."**

“BOLTON.”

Bolton's letter excited in my mind a tumult of feeling. From the beginning of my acquaintance I had regarded him with daily increasing admiration. Young men like a species of mental fealty—a friendship that seems to draw them upward and give them an ideal of something above themselves. Bolton's ripe, elegant scholarship, his rare, critical taste, his calm insight into men and things, and the depth of his moral judgment, had inspired me with admiration, and his kindness for me with gratitude. It had always been an additional source of interest that there was something veiled about him—something that I could not exactly make out. This letter, so dignified in its melancholy frankness, seemed to let me into the secret of his

life. It showed me the reason of that sort of sad and weary tolerance with which he seemed to regard life and its instincts, so different from the fiery, forward-looking hope of youth. He had impressed me from the first as one who had made up his mind to endure all things and hope for nothing. To keep watch every moment, to do the duty of the hour thoroughly, bravely, faithfully, as a sentinel paces through wind, rain, and cold—neither asking why, nor uttering complaints—such seemed to be Bolton's theory of life.

The infirmity which he laid open to my view was one, to be sure, attributable in the first place to the thoughtless wrong-doing of confident youth. Yet, in its beginning, how little there was in it that looked like the deep and terrible tragedy to which it was leading! Out of every ten young men who begin the use of stimulants as a social exhilaration, there are perhaps five in whose breast lies coiled up and sleeping this serpent, destined in after years to be the deadly tyrant of their life —this curse, unappeasable by tears or prayers or agonies—with whom the struggle is like that of Laocoön with the hideous Python. Yet songs and garlands and poetry encircle the wine-cup, and ridicule and contumely are reserved for him who fears to touch it.

There was about this letter such a patient dignity, such an evident bracing of the whole man to meet in the bravest manner the hard truth of the situation, and such a disinterested care for others, as were to me inexpressibly touching. I could not help feeling that he judged and sentenced himself too severely, and that this was a case where a noble woman might fitly co-work with a man, and by doubling his nature, give it double power of resistance and victory.

I went hastily up to his room with the letter in my hand, after reading it. It was in the dusk of the evening twilight, but I could see him sitting there gazing out of the window at the fading sky; yet it was too dark for either of us to see the face of the other. There are some conversations that can only be held in darkness—the visible presence of the bodily form is an impediment—in darkness, spirit speaks directly to spirit.

“Bolton,” I said, “I am *yours* to every intent and purpose, yours for life and death.”

“And *after*,” he said, in a deep undertone, grasping my hand. “I knew you would be, Harry.”

“But, Bolton, you judge yourself too severely. Why should you put from yourself the joys that other men, not half so good as you, claim eagerly? If I were a woman like Caroline, I can feel that

I would rather share life with you, in all your dangers and liabilities, than with many another."

He thought a moment, and then said slowly, "It is well for Caroline that she has not this feeling; she probably has by this time forgotten me, and I would not for the world take the responsibility of trying to call back the feeling she once had."

At this moment my thoughts went back over many scenes, and the real meaning of all Caroline's life came to me. I appreciated the hardness of that lot of women which condemns them to be tied to one spot and one course of employment, when needing to fly from the atmosphere of an unhappy experience. I thought of the blank stillness of the little mountain town where her life had been passed, of her restlessness and impatience, of that longing to fly to new scenes and employments that she had expressed to me on the eve of my starting for Europe; yet she had told me her story, leaving out the one vital spot in it. I remembered her saying that she had never seen the man with whom she would think of marriage without a shudder. Was it because she had forgotten? Or was it that woman never even to herself admits that thought in connection with one who seems to have forgotten her? Or had her

father so harshly painted the picture of her lover that she had been led to believe him utterly vile and unprincipled? Perhaps his proud silence had been interpreted by her as the silence of indifference; perhaps she looked back on their acquaintance with indignation that she should have been employed merely to diversify the leisure of a rusticated student and abandoned character. Whatever the experience might be, Caroline had carried it through silently.

Her gay, indifferent, brilliant manner of treating any approach to matters of the heart, as if they were the very last subjects in which she could be supposed to have any experience or interest, had been a complete blind to me; nor could I, through this dazzling atmosphere, form the least conjecture as to how the land actually lay.

In my former letters to her I had dwelt a good deal on Bolton, and mentioned the little fact of finding her photograph in his room. In reply, in a postscript at the end of a letter about everything else, there was a brief notice. "The Mr. Bolton you speak of taught the academy in our place while you were away at college—and of course I was one of his scholars—but I have never seen or heard of him since. I was very young then, and it seems like something in a pre-existent state to

be reminded of him. I believed him very clever then, but was not old enough to form much of an opinion." I thought of all this as I sat silently in the dark with Bolton.

"Are you sure," I said, "that you consult for Caroline's best happiness in doing as you have done?"

There was a long pause, and at last he said, with a deep-drawn breath:

"Yes, I am sure; the less I am to her the better."

"But may not your silence and apparent neglect and indifference have given pain?"

"Probably; but they helped her to cease caring for me; it was necessary that she should."

"Bolton, you are morbid in your estimate of yourself."

"You do not know all, Hal; nor what nor where I have been. I have been swept far out to sea, plunged under deep waters, all the waves and billows have been over me."

"Yet now, Bolton, surely you are on firm land. No man is more established, more reliable, more useful."

"Yet," he said with a kind of shudder, "all this I might lose in a moment. The other day when I dined with Westerford, the good fellow had his wines in all frank fellowship, and pressed them

on me; and the very smell distracted me. I looked at the little glass in which he poured some particularly fine sherry, and held it to me to taste, and thought it was like so much heart's blood. If I had taken one taste, just one, I should have been utterly worthless and unreliable for weeks. Yet Westerford could not understand this; nobody can, except one who has been through my bitter experience. One sip would flash to the brain like fire, and then all fear, all care, all conscience would be gone, and not one glass, but a dozen, would be inevitable, and then you might have to look for me in some of those dens to which the possessed of the devil flee when the fit is on them, and where they rave and tear and cut themselves with stones till the madness is worn out. This has happened to me over and over, after long periods of self-denial and self-control and illusive hope. It seems to me that my experience is like that of a man whom some cruel fiend condemns to go through all the agonies of drowning over and over again—the dark plunge, the mad struggle, the suffocation, the horror, the agony, the clutch at the shore, the weary clamber up steep rocks, the sense of relief, recovery, and hope, only to be wrenched off and thrown back to struggle, and strangle, and sink again."

He spoke with such a deep intensity of voice that I drew in my breath, and a silence as of the grave fell between us.

“ Harry,” he said, after a pause, “ you know we read in the Greek tragedies of men and women whom the gods have smitten with unnatural and guilty purposes, in which they were irresistibly impelled toward what they abominated and shuddered at! Is it not strange that the Greek fable should have a real counterpart in the midst of our modern life; that young men, in all the inexperience and thoughtlessness of youth, should be beguiled into just such a fatality; that there should be a possibility that they could be blighted by just such a doom; and yet that song, and poetry, and social illusion, and society customs, should all be thrown around courses which excite and develop this fatality? What opera is complete without its drinking chorus? I remember when it used to be my forte to sing drinking songs; so the world goes! Men triumph and rejoice going to a doom to which death is a trifle. If I had fallen dead the first glass of wine I tasted, it would have been thought a horrible thing; but it would have been better for my mother, better for me, than to have lived as I did, in such prolonged and inexpressible misery.”

“Oh, no, no, Bolton! don’t say so; you become morbid in dwelling on this subject.”

“No, Hal. I only know more of it than you. This curse has made life an unspeakable burden, a doom instead of a privilege. It has disappointed my friends, and subjected me to humiliations and agonies such that death seems to me a refuge; and yet it was all in its beginning mere thoughtlessness and ignorance. I was lost before I knew it.”

“But you are not lost, and you shall not be!” I exclaimed; “you are good for more than most men now, and you will come through this.”

“Never! to be just as others are. I shall be a vessel with a crack in it always.”

“Well, a vase of fine porcelain with a crack in it is better than earthenware without,” I said.

“If I had not disappointed myself and my friends so often,” said Bolton, “I might look on myself as sound and sane. But the mere sight and smell of the wine at Westerford’s dinner gave me a giddy sensation that alarmed me; it showed that I was not yet out of danger, and it made me resolve to strengthen myself by making you my keeper. You have the advantage of perfectly healthy nerves that have come to manhood without the strain of any false stimulus, and you can be strong for both of us.”

“God grant it!” said I earnestly.

“But I warn you that if the curse comes upon me you are not to trust me. I am a Christian and a man of honour in my sane moments, but, let me tell you, one glass of wine would make me a liar on this subject. I should lie, and intrigue, and deceive the very elect to get at the miserable completion of the aroused fury; and there are times when I am so excited that I fear I may take that first irrevocable step—it is a horror, a nightmare, a temptation of the devil—for that there is a devil men with my experience know; but there is a kind of safety in having a friend of a steady pulse with me who knows all. The mere fact that you do know helps to hold me firm.”

“Bolton,” said I, “the situation you offer to Caroline in the care of the *Ladies' Cabinet* will of course oblige her to come to New York. Shall you meet her and renew your acquaintance?”

“I do not desire to,” he said.

There was a slight hesitancy and faltering of his voice as he spoke.

“Yet it can hardly be possible that you will not meet; you will have arrangements to make with her.”

“That is one of the uses, among others, of having you. All that relates to her affairs will pass

through you ; and now let us talk of the **magazine**, and its programme for the season. What is the reason, Hal, that you waste your forces in short sketches ? Why do you not boldly dash out into a serial story ? Come, now, I am resolved, among other things, on a serial story by Harry **Hender-
son.**"

Accepting Bolton's offer, I entered with spirit upon my editorial duties, and very soon afterwards my engagement with Eva Van Arsdel was recognized as a *fait accompli*. The announcement of my engagement brought the usual influx of congratulations by letter and in person. Bolton was gravely delighted, shook my hand fraternally, and even promised to quit his hermit hole and go with me to call upon the parents of my betrothed. Our wedding was a success, so far as cheerfulness and enjoyment was concerned. We spent our honeymoon in the old village where I was born, and rambled like two school-children hand in hand over all the haunts of my boyhood. Having spent some charming days, we returned to New York, where I settled down under a great pressure of business at the office, while my home was growing leaf by leaf, and unfolding flower by flower under the creative hands of my home-queen and sovereign lady.

“Harry,” said my wife, the morning of the day of our projected house-warming, “there’s one thing you must get me.”

“Well, princess?”

“Well, you know you and I don’t care for wine, and don’t need it, and can’t afford it; but I have such a pretty set of glasses and decanters, and you must get me a couple of bottles just to set off our table for celebration.”

Immediately I thought of Bolton’s letter, of what he had told me of the effect of wine upon his senses at Hestermann’s dinner-table. I knew it must not be at ours, but how to explain to my wife without compromising him! At a glance I saw that all through the future my intimacy with Bolton must be guided and coloured by what I knew of his history, his peculiar struggles and temptations, and that not merely now, but on many future occasions, I should need a full understanding with my wife to act as I should be obliged to act. I reflected that Eva and I had ceased to be two and had become one, that I owed her an unlimited confidence in those respects where my actions must involve her comfort, or wishes, or co-operation, and so I resolved to let her know about Bolton’s history.

“Eva, darling,” I said, “you remember I told

you there was a mystery about the separation of Bolton and Caroline."

"Yes, of course," said she, wondering; "but what has this to do with this wine question?"

"A great deal," I said, and going to my desk I took out Bolton's letter, and put it into her hand "Read that, my dear, and then tell me what to do." She took it and read it with something of the eagerness of feminine curiosity while I left the room for a few moments. In a little while she came after me and laid her hand on my arm.

"Harry, dear," she said, "I'll stand by you in this thing. His secret shall be sacred with me, and I will make a safe harbour for him where he may have a home without danger. I want our house to seem like a home for him."

"You are an angel, Eva."

"Well, Harry, I must say I always have had conscience about offering wine to some young men that I knew ought to keep clear of it, but it never occurred to me in regard to such a grave noble man as Bolton."

"We never know who may be in this danger. It is a diseased action of the nervous system—often inherited—a thing very little understood, like the tendency to insanity or epilepsy. But

while we know such things are, we cannot be too careful."

"I should never have forgiven myself, Harry, if I had done it."

"The result would have been that Bolton would never have dined with us again; he is resolute to keep entirely out of all society where this temptation meets him."

"Well, we don't want it, don't need it, and won't have it. Mary makes magnificent coffee, and that's ever so much better. So that matter is settled, Harry, and I'm ever and ever so glad you told me. I do admire him so much! There is something really sad and noble in his struggle."

"Many a man with that temptation who fails often exercises more self-denial and self-restraint than most Christians," said I.

"I'm sure I don't deny myself much. I generally want to do just what I do," said Eva.

"You always want to do all that is good and generous," said I.

"I think, on the whole," said Eva, reflectively, "my self-denial is in not doing what other people want me to. I'm like Mrs. Quickly. I want to please everybody. I wanted to please mamma and Aunt Maria."

"And came very near marrying a man you couldn't love, purely to oblige people."

"If you hadn't rescued me," she said, laughing. "But now, Harry, really I want some little extravagance about our dinner. So if we don't have wine, buy the nicest of grapes and pears, and I will arrange a pretty fruit piece for the centre of the table."

"My love, I will get you all the grapes and pears you want."

"And my little Ruth has sent me in this lovely tumbler of apple-jelly. You see, I held sweet counsel with her yesterday on the subject of jelly-making, where I am only a novice, and hers is splendid; literally now splendid, for see how the light shines through it! And what do you think? the generous little puss actually sent me in half-a-dozen tumblers."

"What a perfect saint!" said I.

"And I am to have all the flowers in her garden. She says the frost will take them in a day or two if we don't. Harry, next summer we must take lessons of her about our little back-yard. I never saw so much made of so little ground."

"She'll be only too delightful," said I.

"Well, now, mind you are home at five. I want you to look the house over before your friends come, and see if I have got everything as pretty as it can be."

"Are they to '*process*' through the house and see your blue room, and your pink room, and your guest chamber, and all?"

"Yes, I want them to see all through how pretty the rooms are, and then, sometimes, perhaps, we shall tempt them to stay all night."

"And sleep in the chamber that is called Peace," said I, "after the fashion of Pilgrim's Progress."

"Come, Harry, begone! I want you to go, so as to be sure and come back early."

Dear reader, fancy now a low-studded room, with crimson curtains and carpet, a deep recess, filled by a crimson divan with pillows, the lower part of the room taken up by a row of bookshelves, three feet high, which ran all round the room, and accommodated my library. The top of this formed a convenient shelf, on which all our pretty little wedding presents—statuettes, bronzes, and articles of *vertu*—were arranged. A fireplace, surrounded by an old-fashioned border of Dutch tiles, with a pair of grandmotherly brass

and irons, rubbed and polished to an extreme of brightness, exhibits a wood fire, all laid in order to be lighted at the touch of the match. My wife has dressed the house with flowers, which our pretty little neighbour has almost stripped her garden to contribute. There are vases of fire-coloured nasturtiums and many-hued chrysanthemums, the arrangement of which has cost the little artist an afternoon's study, but which I pronounce to be perfect. I have come home from my office an hour earlier to see if she has any commands.

"Here, Harry," she says, with a flushed face, "I believe everything now is about as perfect as it can be. Now, come and stand at this door, and see how you think it would strike anybody, when they first came in. You see I've heaped up those bronze vases on the mantel with nothing but nasturtiums; and it has such a surprising effect in that dark bronze! Then I've arranged those white chrysanthemums right against these crimson curtains. And now come out in the dining-room, and see how I've set the dinner-table! You see I've the prettiest possible centre-piece of fruit and flowers. Isn't it lovely?"

Of course I kissed her, and said it was lovely,

and that she was lovelier; and she was a regular little enchantress, witch, and fairy-queen, and ever so much more to the same purport. And then Alice came down, all equipped for conquest, as pretty an additional ornament to the house as heart could desire. And when the clock was on the stroke of six, and we heard the feet of our guests at the door, we lighted our altar-fire in the fire-place; for it must be understood that this was a pure *coup de théâtre*, a brightening, vivifying, ornamental luxury—one of the things we were determined to have, on the strength of having determined not to have a great many others. How proud we were when the blaze streamed up and lighted the whole room, fluttered on the pictures, glinted here and there on the gold bindings of the books, made dreamy lights and deep shadows, and called forth all the bright glowing colour of the crimson tints which seemed to give out their very heart to firelight! My wife was evidently proud of the effect of all things in our rooms, which Jim declared looked warm enough to bring a dead man to life. Bolton was seated in due form in a great, deep arm-chair, which, we informed him, we had bought especially with reference to him, and the corner was to be known henceforth as his corner.

“Well,” said he, with grave delight, “I have brought my final contribution to your establishment;” and forthwith from the capacious hinder pockets of his coat he drew forth a pair of kittens, and set them down on the hearth-rug. “There, Harry,” he said, gravely, “there are a pair of ballet dancers that will perform for you gratis, at any time.”

“Oh, the little witches, the perfect loves!” said my wife and Alice, rushing at them.

Bolton very gravely produced from his pocket two long strings with corks attached to them, and hanging them to the gas fixtures, began, as he said, to exhibit the ballet dancing, in which we all became profoundly interested. The wonderful leaps and flings and other achievements of the performers occupied the whole time till dinner was announced.

“Now, Harry,” said my wife, “if we let Little Cub see the kittens, before she’s waited on table, it’ll utterly demoralize her. So we must shut them in carefully;” which was done.

I don’t think a dinner party was ever a more brilliant success than ours; partly owing to the fact that we were a mutual admiration society, and our guests felt about as much sense of appropriation and property in it as we did ourselves. The

house was in a sort of measure "our house," and the dinner "our dinner." In short, we were all of us strictly *en famille*. The world was one thing, and we were another, outside of it and by ourselves, and having a remarkably good time. Everybody got some share of praise. Mary got praised for her cooking. The cooking-stove was glorified for baking so well, and Bolton was glorified for recommending the cooking-stove. And Jim and Alice and my wife congratulated each other on the lovely looks of the dining-room. We shuddered together in mutual horror over what the wall-paper there had been; and we felicitated the artists that had brought such brilliant results out of so little. The difficulties that had been overcome in matching the paper and arranging the panels were forcibly dwelt upon; and some sly jokes seemed to pass between Jim and Alice, applicable to certain turns of events in these past operations. After dinner we had most transcendent coffee, and returned to our parlour as gay of heart as if we had been merry with wine. The kittens had got thoroughly at home by that time, having investigated the whole of the apartment, and began exhibiting some of their most irresistible antics, with a social success among us of a most flattering nature. Alice de-

clared that she should call them Taglioni and Madame Céleste, and proceeded to tie blue and pink bows upon their necks, which they scratched and growled at in quite a warlike manner. A low whine from the entry interrupted us; and Eva, opening the door and looking out, saw poor old Stumpy sitting on the mat, with the most good-dog air of dejected patience.

“Why, here’s Stumpy, poor fellow!” she said.

“Oh, don’t trouble yourself about him!” said Bolton. “I’ve taught him to sit out on the mat. He’s happy enough if he only thinks I’m inside.”

“But, poor fellow,” said Eva, “he looks as if he wanted to come in.”

“Oh, he’ll do well enough, never mind him!” said Bolton, looking a little embarrassed. “It was silly of me to bring him, only he is so desolate to have me go out without him.”

“Well, he shall come in,” said Eva. “Come in, you poor homely old fellow,” she said. “I daresay you’re as good as an angel; and to-night’s my house-warming, and not even a dog shall have an ungratified desire, if I can help it.”

So poor Stumpy was installed by Bolton in the corner, and looked perfectly beatified.

And now, while we have brought all our char-

acters before the curtain, and the tableau of the fireside is complete, as we sit there all around the hearth, each perfectly at home with the other, in heart and mind, and with even the poor beasts that connect us with the lower world brightening in our enjoyment, this is a good moment for the curtain to fall.



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